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Atishi says BJP asked her to join it or get arrested

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SALAR
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Drought aide: HM passes the buck to EC, CM retorts

CM accuses Centre of doing injustice to people of K'taka

BENGALURU/MYSURU, 2 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday sparred over alleged non-release of drought relief funds by the Centre to the State.

Shah said that the Centre could not release funds on time because the State government submitted the proposal three months late.

"Today the application for drought relief from the Centre is with Election Commission. Congress is doing politics over it," he said. Siddaramaiah accused the BJP-led government at the Centre of betraying and doing injustice to the people of the State, while Shah alleged delay on the part of State in sending the proposal seeking relief. "The government that is in power here is not working in the interest of Karnataka. The Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister here...one is busy trying to save his chair and the other is busy trying to snatch the chair. No one has the people of Karnataka in their mind," Shah said.

Karnataka has declared in 223 out of 240 taluks as drought-hit; 196 of them were categorised as severely drought affected. Earlier in the day, in Mysuru, Siddaramaiah claimed that Shah has no moral right to seek votes from the electorate of Karnataka, as he accused the BJP-led government at the Centre of betraying and doing injustice to the people of the State over the issue of delay in release of drought relief funds in particular.

It's been five months since his government first approached the Centre seeking drought relief but not even a rupee has been given to the state, he said. Three memorandums have been given since October; also the central team had come for inspection and they had submitted their report to the Union government. "Is Amit Shah giving the money from his house? Is it a 'Bhikshe' (alms)? It's our money, our tax money," he added. Congress has been using delay in drought relief as one of the major issues in its Lok Sabha poll campaign, along with alleged injustice to the state in tax devolution, grant in aid, and delay in clearance to central projects.

Meanwhile, questioning as to what Congress did for Karnataka during ten years of UPA rule. Shah said, "They should give an account of it or not? I have come with an account, during 10 years of UPA rule Manmohan Singh government gave Karnataka only Rs 1.42 thousand crore, while Narendra Modi gave Rs 4.91 thousand crore, three times more." —*PTI*

Amit Shah alleges delay on the part of State in sending the proposal seeking relief, but Chief Minister Siddaramaiah denies it **PHOTO: PTI**

Will retire from electoral politics after term: CM

MYSURU, 2 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has said he will not contest any elections in the future, citing advancing age and health conditions.

Siddaramaiah was responding to media queries over demands by his constituents in Varuna Assembly segment that he contest the MLA elections again. "I am 77 years old. There is still four years (as CM and MLA). When my term ends, I will be 81 or 82...I won't have the health and cannot work with enthusiasm," Siddaramaiah said.

Siddaramaiah said he had entered politics in 1978 and he would have completed 50 years in electoral politics when he retires. He has made similar statements in the past. In 2013, after being elected chief minister for the first time, the Congress leader told reporters that it was his last election. He had repeated the same in 2018. At a rally held near Mysuru after taking oath as chief minister for the second time in 2023, Siddaramaiah had said that he would remain active in politics and would not be contesting any more polls. —*Salar News*

The Rajarajeshwari Nagar lake, which was a habitat for birds, has been drained for renovation during a water crisis in Bengaluru. The residents of the area have reported that the birds have disappeared due to a lack of water **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Mercury to soar over 40°C amid heatwave in K'taka

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a heatwave warning for parts of Karnataka, with temperatures expected to reach highs between 40 and 50 degree Celsius until 5 April. Dry weather is also expected to persist throughout this period.

A Prasad, an IMD official told Salar News "We are anticipating maximum temperatures exceeding the historical averages by a significant margin. The temperatures in Bengaluru however, will not reach that level." The heatwave is particularly concerning for coastal and north interior region, he said.

While Bengaluru is expected to experience slightly cooler temperatures around 35 to 36 degree Celsius in the next 24 hours, other parts of the State are forecast to see significant increases. Districts including Belagavi, Bidar, Gadag, Dharwad, Haveri, and Raichur could see maximum temperatures, while Bengaluru Rural, Davanagere, Hassan, Kolar, Mandya, and Mysuru districts could see a 2 to 3 degree Celsius increase. Bagalkot currently holds the record for the state's highest temperature at 41.2 degree Celsius.

However, IMD has predicted light rainfall in several districts starting 6 April in isolated places over Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Bidar, Kalaburgi, Kodagu, Mandya, Mysuru districts of Karnataka.

Doctors have advised certain measures that people can take during this season. Lalitha Bhatati, a senior BBMP health officer said, "Problems like heatstroke, dehydration and even heart attacks can occur. The main resolution to this heatwave is the consumption of water and other liquids. In addition, fruits and vegetables contain high amounts of water in it." —*Salar News*

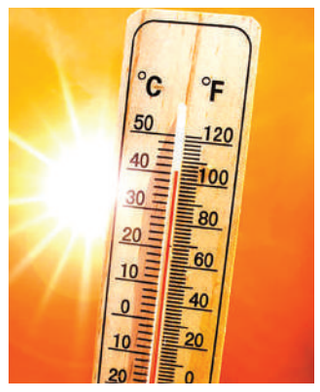
Do's and don'ts during a heatwave

Dos

- Drink plenty of lukewarm water throughout the day
- Wear loose, light-coloured clothing
- Take frequent breaks in air-conditioned spaces if possible
- Apply sunscreen before stepping out of the house

Don't

- Avoid consuming cold water immediately after spending time outdoors
- Avoid engaging in outdoor activity between 12pm and 4pm
- Avoid alcohol and caffeinated drinks
- Avoid skipping meals
- Avoid consuming heavy meals



DECODING CAA

On 11 March, the Centre notified Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) four years after the law was passed. The move came a few hours after Supreme Court rapped State Bank of India for not releasing electoral bonds data, leading to questions over the law's motive. Salar News decodes CAA amid allegations that the Centre is using it to filter out minorities.

See Pages P3&P4

SC INTERVENES

Sanjay Singh gets bail in excise case after 6 months

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to AAP leader Sanjay Singh in a money laundering case related to the Delhi excise policy irregularities case after six months. The court order came after the ED chose not to oppose Sanjay Singh's bail plea.

A bench led by Justice Sanjiv Khanna directed the release of Sanjay Singh on bail during the pendency of trial in a money laundering case relating to excise policy irregularities. The Enforcement Directorate informed the Supreme Court the agency has no objection to Sanjay getting bail.

The ED response came after the court sought to know from the investigating agency whether it needed further custody of AAP leader Sanjay Singh in the excise policy case. The Supreme Court clarified that Sanjay Singh will be released on terms and conditions to be fixed by the trial court. The court also made it clear that concession shall not be cited as precedent. Meanwhile the court said that Sanjay Singh may continue with his political activities. In the meantime the top court disposed of the Sanjay Singh another plea challenging his arrest and remand in the case observing that it has become infructuous. —*PTI*

Sanjay Singh **PHOTO: PTI**

- The Enforcement Directorate informed the Supreme Court the agency has no objection to Sanjay getting bail. The ED response came after the court sought to know whether it needed further custody

Until all three of my brothers, Arvindji, Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, come out of custody, this happiness is incomplete. This is the victory of truth. I had full faith in the judicial process.

- Anita Singh, Sanjay Singh's wife

CH'GARH: 10 NAXALITES KILLED IN ENCOUNTER

RAIPUR, 2 APRIL

In a major anti-insurgency operation, 10 Naxalites, including a woman, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Tuesday, police said. The gunfight occurred around 6am in a forest between Lendra and Korcholi villages under the Gangaloor police station area, where a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P said.

"It appears that they belonged to PLGA (Peoples' Liberation Guerilla Army) company no. 2 of Maoists," the official said.

Naxalites carry out Tactical Counter Offensive Campaign in summers between every year and step up their activities. Several attacks have been carried out against security forces in Bastar. —*PTI*

Fire at an Istanbul nightclub leaves at least 25 dead

ISTANBUL, 2 APRIL

A fire at an Istanbul nightclub during renovations on Tuesday left 25 people dead and others badly hurt, officials and reports said. Several people have been detained for questioning. At least eight people were injured, seven of them hospitalised in serious condition, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported. The nightclub, which was closed for the renovations, was on the ground floor of a 16-storey building in the Besiktas district on the European side of the city bisected by the Bosphorus. The fire was put out. The cause of the fire is under investigation. —*AP*

ECI starts 'Myth vs Reality' site against fake news

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Election Commission of India on Tuesday launched a 'Myth vs Reality Register' as part of the ongoing General Elections 2024 to combat the spread of misinformation and uphold the integrity of the electoral process. Myth vs Reality Register' is accessible to the public through Election Commission's official website. It has been designed in a user-friendly format covering areas of myths and misinformation around election topics. —*ANI*

SC slams Ramdev's apology, Patanjali to face action

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Supreme Court on Tuesday tore into Patanjali Ayurved's defence for putting out misleading advertisements, rejecting the apology from yoga guru Ramdev and the firm's managing director Acharya Balkrishna as "lip service" and warning them against perjury.

The bench, headed by Justice Hima Kohli, also questioned Centre's alleged inaction over Patanjali's tall claims about the efficacy of its products and denigrating allopathy during Covid peak and asked why the government chose to keep its "eyes shut".

Both Ramdev and Balkrishna were present in court in connection with show cause notices on why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against them.

The bench, also comprising Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, posted the matter for hearing on 10 April and said Ramdev and Balkrishna have to appear again.

Giving them a last one week opportunity to file affidavits, it took strong note of their "absolute defiance" in not adhering to the undertaking given before it in the case filed by Indian Medical Association (IMA).

"Your apology is not persuading this court really to accept it. We think it is more of a lip service," Justice Kohli told the Counsel representing Patanjali Ayurved MD.

Patanjali Ayurved Ltd assured the top court on 21 November last year that it will not violate any law, especially those relating to advertising or branding of products manufactured and marketed by it. It also assured the bench that "no casual statements claiming medicinal efficacy or against any system of medicine will be released to the media in any form". —*PTI*

DESPITE IRDAI RULES

Insurance firms turn down autistic kids

VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ
BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Despite legal frameworks ensuring access to medical assistance and interventions for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) under health insurance, many families in the State are facing denials and limitations in coverage from insurance companies.

Autism, characterised by challenges in communication and behaviour, affects individuals differently and typically manifests by the age of 2 or 3. While individuals with autism may excel in certain areas, such as art or mathematics, they often require specialised support and interventions. However, parents of autistic children have said insurance companies are denying coverage or refusing to honour claims by violating the regulations set by Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

A poster posted online by one of the parents **PHOTO: SALAR**

SALAR EXCLUSIVE

Despite obtaining disability certificates from the State government for their children, parents encounter obstacles when disclosing their child's autism diagnosis to insurance providers. The lack of clarity in policy terms and conditions leaves families uncertain about their entitlement to coverage.

For instance, Sangeetha, a Bengaluru-based parent who discovered her child's autism at the age of 10, faced insurance denials when her child required medical treatment for dengue. Despite having claimed family insurance multiple times before, the expenses incurred during her child's illness were not covered, leaving the family burdened with significant financial strain.

Similar experiences were echoed by parents who spoke to Salar News, highlighting the widespread lack of availability of insurance coverage for autistic individuals in the State and the country at large.

The parents of autistic kids are not requesting insurance companies to give coverage for neurological and developmental disorders such as speech therapies, said City-based Geetha whose autistic son Om was denied health cover by insurance companies. "We are simply asking for comprehensive health coverage to include provisions for accidents and common illnesses, just like any other individual," she said.

—*Salar News*

Continued on page 2

15 kids fall ill after having mid-day meals

KOPPAL, 2 APRIL

More than 15 children experienced severe illness after consuming mid-day meals at Government Primary School located in Singapura village of Gangavathi taluk in Koppal district.On Tuesday during lunchtime, instead of the usual rice and sambar, the mid-day meal staff prepared chitrana (lemon rice). Shortly after consuming the meal, some children began to exhibit symptoms of vomiting and diarrhoea. The children were taken to Sangapura Primary Health Centre. Several officials, including hospital DHO Dr Lingaraj, visited the health centre to oversee the treatment. Amid the emergency, parents rushed to the hospital in a state of panic upon hearing about their children's condition.
—Salar News

4 held for duping with false promises

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

City Cyber Crime branch (CCB) arrested four people for swindling Rs 4 crore in the guise of offering membership to Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC). The fraudsters used fake letterheads and forged signatures of Chief Minister and Governor to carry out their scam. The arrested suspects are identified as Riyaz Ahmed, Yusuf, and Chandrappa. The gang targeted a woman, promising her KPSC membership in exchange for a sum of Rs 5 crore. However, after handing over Rs 4.10 crore, the victim grew suspicious of the fraudsters' activities and reported the incident to CCB police. It was discovered that the accused had fake government documents, including fabricated appointment letters bearing counterfeit signatures of high-ranking officials. Following interrogation by CCB, they confessed to their involvement in the fraudulent recruitment scheme.*—Salar News*

JD(S)-BJP alliance on moral grounds, says Nikhil

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

JD(S) and BJP have struck a partnership for Lok Sabha elections on moral grounds and the alliance has united the workers of both parties, said JD(S) State President Nikhil Kumaraswamy on Tuesday. JD(S) and BJP have come together to counter the Congress which is resorting to unethical practices, Kumaraswamy said during an election campaign alongside BJP candidate K Sudhakar in Doddaballapur on Tuesday. The JD(S) leader said Prime Minister Narendra Modi will win a third term.About the resignation of former MLA Bachegowda from the party, Kumaraswamy said efforts were made to dissuade him from leaving.*—Salar News*

Workers drill a borewell at Kamakshipalya amid the ongoing water crisis in Bengaluru
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

No match between PM & INDIA bloc, says Shah

'Modi never takes leave & Rahul goes abroad for summer'

Opposition leader R Ashoka, BJP leader BS Yediyurappa, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy and State BJP President BY Vijayendra, at a meeting, on Tuesday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Exuding confidence about the BJP's '400 paar' (400-plus) target, senior party leader Amit Shah on Tuesday said there is no match between the NDA led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the INDIA bloc.

He called the alliance 'pariwarwadis' (dynasts) and 'brashtacharis' (corrupt persons).

Shah said he believed BJP would win all 28 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka as well.

There is also no match between Modi, who never takes leave, and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who travels abroad as summer sets in, he added.

Addressing party workers and leaders here, he said he has travelled to about 60 per cent of the states across the country, and claimed that everywhere people are chanting slogans of "Modi, Modi".

"In the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, Karnataka gave 43 per cent votes and gave us 17 seats. In 2019, with 51 per cent votes, they gave us 25 seats. But this time my request to people and party workers is to ensure 60 per cent votes and win all 28 seats for BJP," he added.

Shah was addressing workers at Palace Grounds here.

Shah said they will not let Congress open its account in the state.

"For 23 years, Modi with transparency has set an example in the country. On the other side, there is this 'ghamandiya' (arrogant) alliance of corruption."

During the 10 years of Congress rule under Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi, there was a scam and corruption of Rs 12 lakh crore, he further claimed, and also hit out at Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar over the issue of corruption. "People of Karnataka don't like corruption," he said.

Listing out various scams reported by the media under UPA rule, the Home Minister said Congress is competing with Modi.

—PTI

AMIT SHAH HOLDS JD(S)-BJP MEET AMID CRACKS IN ALLIANCE

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday held a joint meeting with JD(S) and BJP leaders, as the campaign of the alliance partners for Lok Sabha polls is set to gain momentum.

The meeting is a move by BJP and JD(S) to have better coordination on the ground and thrash out potential conflict issues.JD(S) leader and former Chief Minister H D Kumaraswamy and some of his party's core committee members including its chief GT Devegowda, veteran BJP leader BS Yediyurappa, saffron party state President BY Vijayendra and its General Secretary in-charge of elections in Karnataka Radha Mohan Das Agarwal, along with several other leaders from the two parties were part of the meeting.

Kumaraswamy on Monday said he along with his party colleagues will apprise Shah and share feedback on the poll situation in various constituencies across Karnataka ahead of Lok Sabha polls. *—PTI*

LOK SABHA POLLS

Shah calls up, but Eshwarappa won't bow out

SHIVAMOGGA, 2 APRIL

KS Eshwarappa ***PHOTO: PTI***

Senior BJP leader KS Eshwarappa on Tuesday said the Union Home Minister Amit Shah called him up and asked him to withdraw his candidature from this Lok Sabha constituency but he stood firm on his decision to contest.

Miffed over his son KE Kanthesh being denied the ticket to contest from neighbouring Haveri, the former deputy chief minister had announced he would enter the fray in Shivamogga, where BJP has again fielded the party veteran BS Yediyurappa's son and MP BY Raghavendra.

Eshwarappa, who had also served as the party's state unit chief, had alleged that Yediyurappa, a member of the party's Parliamentary Board and central election committee, promised a ticket to his son but betrayed him.

He said Shah, who was on a visit to campaign for the Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka, called him up and asked him to withdraw his candidature but he did not agree. "This morning 'iron man' Amit Shah had called me. He told me that you are such a senior leader and contesting the election, which is surprising. He asked me why I am contesting," he told reporters here.

According to him, Shah asked him to meet him in Delhi on 3 April. Eshwarappa said he agreed but requested him not to press him to withdraw his decision, as it will cause him a problem. "He must have understood my sentiments behind contesting the election. I will win the election and it will help achieve all the objectives for which I am contesting the election," Eshwarappa said. He also said Shah promised to take care of his son's political future. "I spoke to my son who told me not to worry about his future and it will be enough if it helps the state BJP unit. I am going to meet Shah in Delhi tomorrow." Eshwarappa said BJP in Karnataka unit should follow what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been saying – to end dynastic politics.
—PTI

EC files complaint against Yathindra

C'NAGAR, 2 APRIL

A flying squad team of Election Commission have filed a complaint with Hanur police against former MLA Yathindra Siddaramaiah for allegedly making derogatory statements against Union Home Minister Amit Shah during a Congress party meeting.

On Monday, Gundurao of Flying Squad team urged authorities to take appropriate action against Yatindra, son of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, for violating the model code of conduct by delivering objectionable remarks against Shah.

During a Congress workers' meeting convened in Hanur on 28 March, Yatindra allegedly referred Shah as a "hooligan" and "rowdy," and accused him of being involved in Gujarat genocide. He alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had appointed such an individual to a high-ranking position in the country.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) filed a complaint in Bengaluru, prompting the Election Officer of Chamarajanagar to issue a notice to Yatindra, seeking clarification regarding his statements.

Hanur police said no FIR was registered against Yatindra as the complaint comes under non-cognizable offences. *—Salar News*

Congress Bengaluru Central candidate Mansoor Ali Khan inaugurates workers' meeting with Minister KJ George, MLA Rizwan Arshad and others
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Kannada becomes 53rd language of Vatican News

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Vatican News has announced the addition of Kannada as the 53rd language making news accessible to millions of Kannada speakers in India. This collaboration between Dicastery for Communication and Archdiocese of Bengaluru marks a significant step in ensuring that news about the Pope, the Vatican, the Universal Church, and the world is available to the community in Karnataka.

Archdiocese of Bengaluru Archbishop Peter Machado expressed his joy at the launch of Kannada pages on Vatican News.

Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication, hailed the addition of Kannada as a tribute to Indian culture and a testament to the Church's commitment to authentic communication and unity.

Andrea Tornielli, Editorial Director of Vatican Media, highlighted the decision to include Kannada as a service to the millions of Indians who speak the language, strengthening the bonds between Rome and the world.

Massimiliano Menichetti, Head of Vatican Radio – Vatican News, underscored the Church's mission to spread hope and the Good News through platforms, including new technologies like the internet.
—Salar News

Former MLA KP Bache Gowda joins Congress in presence of KPCC President DK Shivakumar and others ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

SWR LEASES OUT 114.5 ACRES TO SUBURBAN RAILWAY

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Bengaluru Suburban Railway Project (BSRP) made significant headway on Tuesday when South Western Railway leased it 114.472 acres of land for Corridor-4 from Heelalige to Rajanukunte in the city, sources said. According to sources, the Railways handed over the land to the Rail Infrastructure Development Company-Karnataka Limited (K-RIDE) for Corridor-4, which is called 'Kanaka Line'. K-RIDE is executing the project.

"Also, the lease agreement for revised Railway land from 157.07 acres to 85.707 acres for Corridor-2 (Mallige Line) was also signed today," a source told PTI. This transfer of land will help speed up the project, which is going on at a snail's pace, the sources said. *—PTI*

Congress appoints Presidents for 7 districts

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Congress appointed presidents for seven districts in State ahead of Lok Sabha elections.

The party has announced new names for the President post for Ballari, Bengaluru East, Haveri, Kopal, Udupi, Raichur, and Shivamogga.

"Congress President has approved the proposal of the appointment of the Presidents of the following District/City Congress Committees of Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee, as follows, with immediate effect," Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal said.

Meanwhile, Congress will release its manifesto for Lok Sabha elections on 5 April at the All India Congress Committee office in New Delhi, announced the party's General Secretary KC Venugopal on Monday.

"We will hold two Mega Rallies on 6th April - in Jaipur and Hyderabad," Venugopal said on X. "In Jaipur, INC President Mallikarjun Kharge, CPP Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi will be launching the manifesto addressing the mega rally," the post said. *—Salar News*

10 parties of INDIA bloc to back Cong in State

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

A total of 10 political parties affiliated with INDIA bloc will support Congress in Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Tuesday.

"All alliance partners have given us a written letter of support. While the number of votes they bring is significant, our priority lies in aligning with parties that share our ideological vision," Shivakumar said at a joint press conference in the City on Tuesday along with representatives from these parties.

Highlighting the impact of coalition politics, Shivakumar referred the 2019 elections in Tumakuru where the Congress-JD(S) alliance narrowly missed victory. "CPI secured 17,000 votes and Deve Gowda lost the elections by a mere 12,000 votes. We don't want a similar situation in the 2024 elections. Hence, we want all the alliance partners to work unitedly," he said.

He criticised Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for their selective engagement in State affairs, particularly during times of crisis. —Salar News
—Salar News

JD(S) LEADERS GOWDA, ANJANAPPA JOIN CONGRESS

BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

Two JD(S) leaders K P Bache Gowda and Putta Anjanappa from Chikkaballapur constituency joined Congress on Tuesday.

Shivakumar said Congress doesn't differentiate between new and old guards. "The winds of change are sweeping. BJP has realised that it can't win Karnataka and hence has changed 12 sitting MPs. BJP is talking about principles and caste in Chikkaballapur, but where was the principle and community when they pulled down Kumaraswamy's government."

Congress has given tickets to 8 Vokkaligas, while BJP and JD(S) have neglected the community. Gowda has been doing politics based on principles and hence he has joined Congress, he said.

Shivakumar also said JD(S) leader CM Ibrahim's son is interested in joining Congress.
—Salar News

AUTISM DAY

Autistic kids out of insurance coverage

VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ
BENGALURU, 2 APRIL

City parents are fighting for insurance coverage for the medical needs of autistic children in City. Legal advisers have support the parents' claim, arguing that autistic children deserve equal access to necessary healthcare.

Rakesh Rao, an advocate at Legal Mind law firm in the City, told **Salar News** that health insurance coverage cannot be denied based on the presence of autism. "The National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities (Amendment) Act explicitly regulates that treatment for any health complications must be covered and cannot be denied due to disabilities."

Rao suggested that parents facing such denial of coverage should consider filing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), raising the issue in court to seek regulation and ensure fair treatment under the law.

Representational photo ***PHOTO: SALAR***

SALAR EXCLUSIVE

What insurance firms say

When **Salar News** reached out, insurance companies responded with the following replies:

1. Mental health conditions are covered under the guidelines of insurance policies, but it is left to the companies if they want to consider autism in their policies.

2. The companies are in the process of developing a separate product specifically tailored for children with special needs. Although this project may require additional time, it aims to cater specifically to this demographic.

3. One challenge faced in designing such a product is the lack of sufficient data or clinical experience regarding the long-term risks associated with it.

4. As a business, it's essential to recognise that even though only 5-6% of children are diagnosed with autism, providing coverage for autism-related services might not be beneficial.

Demand of parents

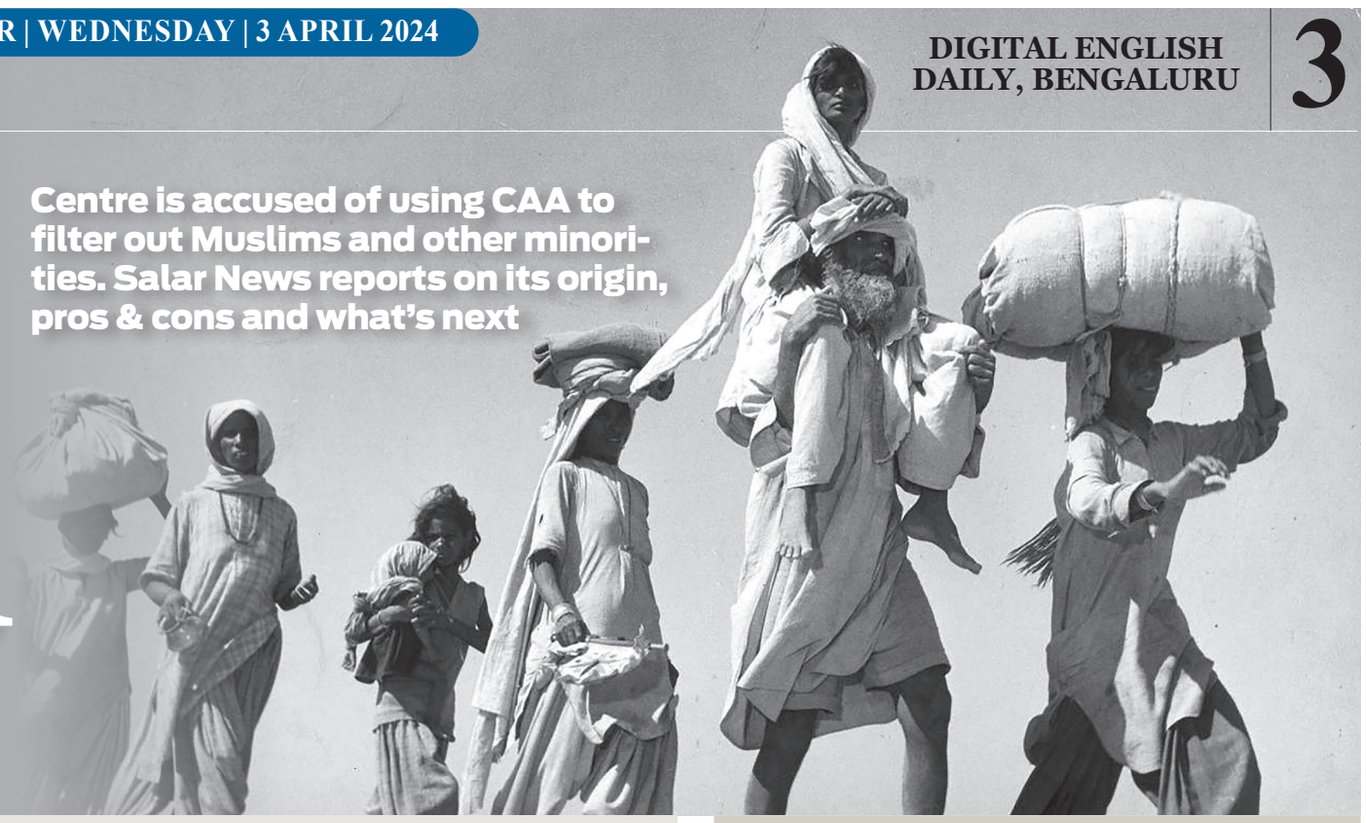
1. For companies providing health coverage for autism, please ensure that the coverage offered is fair and sufficient. Providing a meagre amount of coverage is wasteful and does not adequately support individuals with autism.

2. For companies that currently do not provide health coverage for autism, when do you plan to offer such coverage?

It is crucial to extend coverage to include autism spectrum disorders, as it is a necessary aspect of comprehensive health insurance.
—Salar News

DECODING CAA

Centre is accused of using CAA to filter out Muslims and other minorities. Salar News reports on its origin, pros & cons and what's next



What is Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019

CAA was passed in Parl on 11 Dec, 2019. It provides Indian citizenship for persecuted religious minorities such as Hindu, Christian, Jain, Parsi, Buddhist and Sikh from Afghan, B'desh and Pak who entered India without visa on or before 31 Dec, 2014, and have stayed for 5 yrs. It is the 1st time religion is used as criterion for citizenship

What is Nat'l Register of Citizens?

NRC is a record of those who are legally Indians. It includes information on all citizens as per Citizenship Act, 1955 (see right). BJP vowed its implementation in 2019 manifesto

Assam had its first NRC in 1951 and between 1961 & 1969, thousands of Muslims were exiled to Pak. NRC was updated in 2013 after an SC order. Numbers were out in 2019. It excluded 2 million people of the total Indian population

Criteria for Citizenship under 1955 Act

By birth: People born between 26 Jan, 1950 & 1 July, 1987 got citizenship regardless of parents' nationality. Those born between 1 July, 1987 & 3 Dec, 2004, got citizenship if one parent was a was Indian. Post 2003, citizenship was given if both parents are Indians

By registration

A person of Indian origin who has been a resident of India for 7 years can apply for registration. A person who is married to an Indian citizen can also apply for Indian citizenship

By descent

Individuals of Indian descent living outside the country could register for citizenship, but a person who had voluntarily acquired citizenship of a foreign state was barred from Indian citizenship

By naturalisation

Foreigners may become Indian citizens after residing in the country for at least 12 yrs and renouncing any previous nationalities. It does not provide for dual citizenship

Who is an illegal migrant?

A foreigner who either enters India without papers such as passport and visa, or enters with valid documents but overstays the permitted period. Not eligible for Indian citizenship

They may be jailed or deported under Foreigners Act of 1946 and Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920

India lacks a refugee policy

India neither has a refugee policy nor is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, which secure the rights of refugees to seek asylum

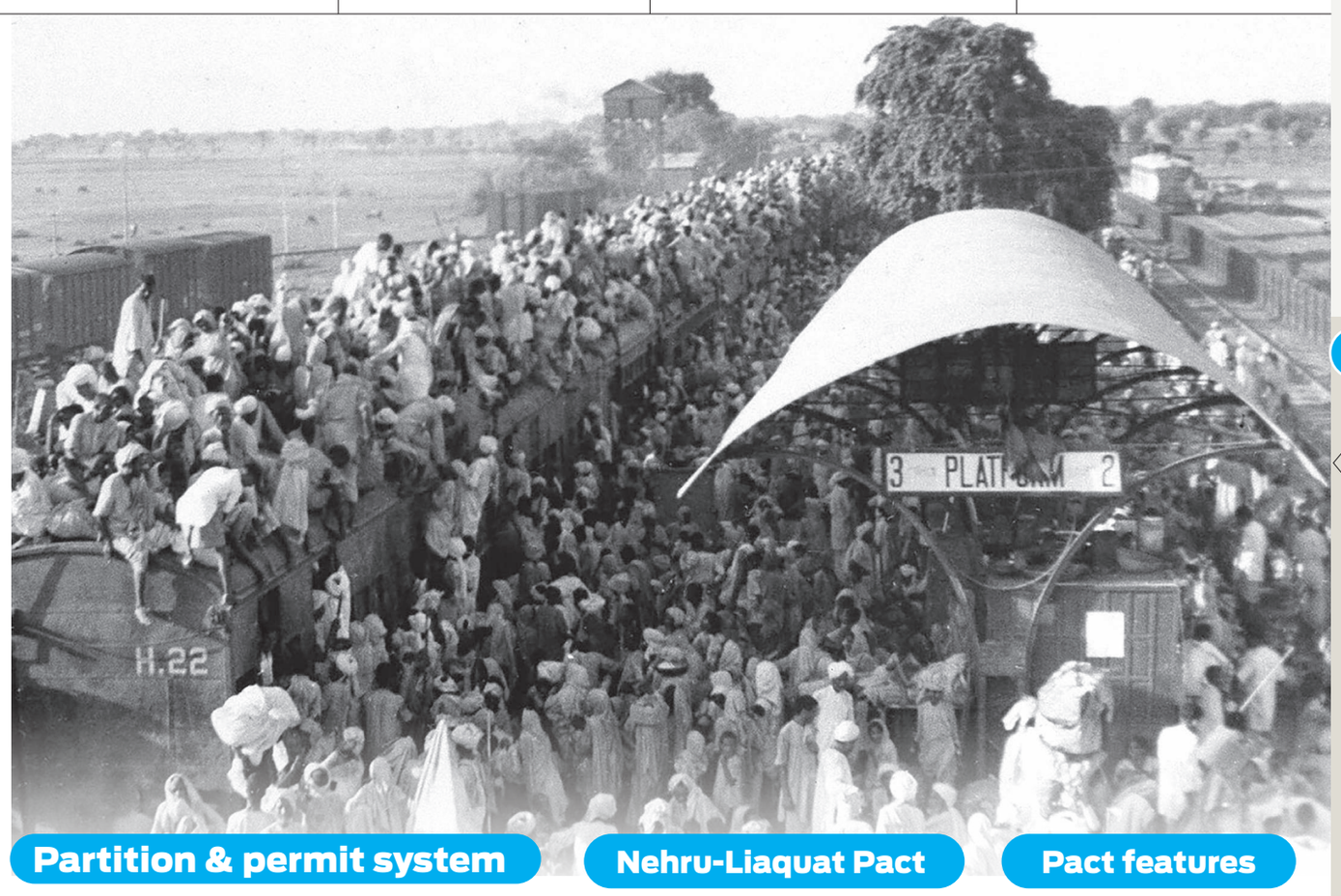
Hence, refugees have no access to healthcare, education or employment

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

- CAA relaxes requirement of naturalisation from 11 years to 5 years
- The cut-off date for citizenship is now 31 December, 2014, which means the applicant should have entered India on or before that date
- Tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura are exempted
- It also exempts areas regulated via Inner Line Permit, which include Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland

Priests can give certificates

Govt has authorised local priests to issue an "eligibility certificate" under CAA to validate the religion of an applicant. Applicants must upload this certificate, an affidavit and other documents to the CAA portal https://indiancitizenshiponline.nic.in/



Partition & permit system

19 July, 1948: This is when permit system came into effect. After Partition, the properties of Muslims who moved to Pakistan were taken over to house Hindus and Sikhs. This posed a difficulty when Muslims returned to India. Hence, the government introduced a permit system that mandated any incoming migrants from West Pakistan, from 19 July, 1948, to obtain a permit to cross the border. The system made it difficult for Muslim exiles to return to India even if they had property back home. The system also discriminated against "Muslim evacuees" while recognising Hindus and Sikhs as "displaced people"

Nehru-Liaquat Pact

It was a treaty signed by India and Pak in 1950 following Partition

This was followed by communal rioting as 1M Hindus and Muslims migrated from and to East Pak. Amit Shah referred to the pact in Parliament to justify CAA

Pact features

Refugees were allowed to return and reclaim their property

It ensured that abducted women and looted property were returned

Recognised minority rights

Introduced a visa system for refugees

Exception in accepting refugees

India has an ad-hoc approach to sheltering refugees on a case-by-case basis. India has sheltered the following refugees in these years:

- Partition refugees **1947**
- Tibetan refugees **1959** (onwards)
- Bangladeshis refugees **1971**
- Sri Lankan Tamil refugees **1980s** (onwards)

Two-track mechanism for asylum

Sri Lankan & Tibetan refugees are registered under Ministry of Home Affairs

Refugees from Afghanistan and Myanmar must register with UNHCR

UNHCR is not operational in Mizoram. Instead, the state government issues ID cards because of which the refugees depend on donations to survive

Children born to illegal immigrants are stateless

What about orphan refugee kids?

India lacks a legal framework to handle orphan refugee children. Salar News contacted UNHCR and Home Ministry seeking clarifications on: are the kids in detention centres; if they are placed in orphanages, do they receive education? UNHCR said it works with authorities and NGOs to help these kids. Unaccompanied kids stay with caregivers and when needed, support from National Child Protection agencies, Childline and Child Welfare Committee is sought

BJP'S PROMISE

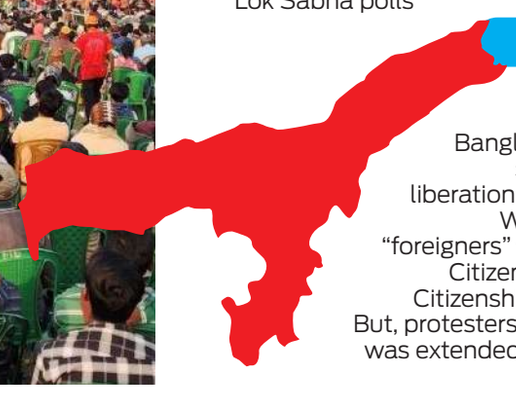
In 1996, BJP vowed to detect illegal migrants, delete them from citizenship list and deport. In 2014, BJP promised a "home" for persecuted Hindus

In 2016, BJP promised that if voted to power, it will rid Assam of illegal influx of Bangladeshi migrants and seal the border

No one can stop CAA: Shah in WB

Home Minister Amit Shah has asserted that no one can stop implementing of CAA as it is the law of the land and accused the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, of misleading people on the issue. He also said it will be implemented before 2024 Lok Sabha polls

WHY IS ASSAM AGAINST CAA?



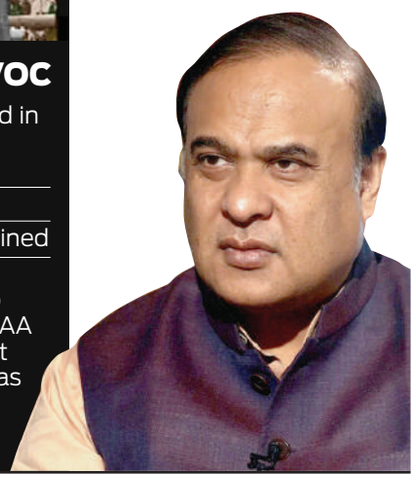
Pakistan became a country in 1947 by including West Pakistan (today's Pakistan) and East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh). But the refusal to accept Bengali as state language soured relations and war ensued in 1971. During Bangladesh liberation war, some 10 million Bangladeshis sought refuge in Assam, WB. Assam Accord was signed in 1985 to identify and deport "foreigners" who entered the state after 24 March, 1971. On 15 July, 2016, Citizenship Amendment Bill was introduced as an amendment to Citizenship Act, 1955. Once it was passed protests erupted in Assam. But, protesters feared that CAA dilutes Assam Accord as the 1971 deadline was extended to 2014, resulting in inflow of more Bangladeshis. Out of 19 lakh excluded from NRC, 7 lakh were Muslims

PROTEST HAVOC

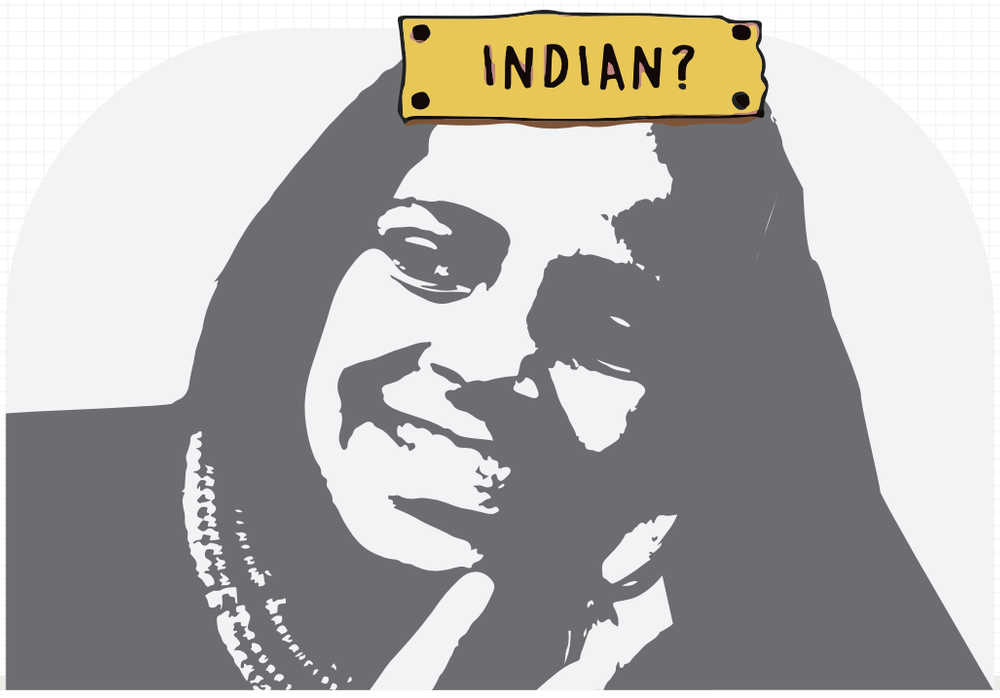
- 5 people were killed in police firing during protest in Assam
- 175 arrested
- At least 1,400 detained
- Assam and West Bengal are the two states where the CAA will affect the most number of people as they border Bangladesh

PROTESTS QUELLED SO FAR

- After Centre notified CAA in Assam on 11 March, 2024, protests erupted at several university campuses
- Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said he will be the first to resign if even one person, who has not applied to be in National Register of Citizens, gets citizenship
- Police issued legal notices to organisations protesting against CAA



SHOULD CITIZENSHIP BE BASED ON RELIGION?



FOR CAA

- CAA aims to protect individuals who have sought refuge in India due to religious persecution
- CAA does not favour any one or two religions for granting citizenship
- CAA is as per the spirit of the Nehru-Liaquat pact
- This act would differentiate between persecuted communities seeking refuge and illegal immigrants
- Amit Shah said 3 nations from where persecuted minorities come are Islamic nations and asked, "Can Muslims be religiously persecuted there?"
- CAA aims to fast-track citizenship process
- Govt says at least 31,000 minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh could benefit from it
- CAA opens the door for illegal migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan and their India-born children who are non-Muslim to acquire Indian citizenship
- It is believed that Hindus and Sikhs should have a natural home in India, since they have 'no other country to call their own'
- Beneficiaries will get voting rights
- It will give them fundamental rights too
- Shah says CAA does not have any provision to impact the citizenship of India's 20 crore Muslims
- It offers beneficiaries a shield against eviction
- Centre claims CAA is not Assam-centric. It applies to the whole country and does not affect Assam Accord

AGAINST CAA

- It targets Muslims. CAA & NRC can reportedly eliminate 20 crore Muslims' citizenship
- 1st instance of religion being a criterion for citizenship, thereby violating principles of secularism
- CAA ignores Shia, Balochi, and Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan, Hazaras in Afghanistan, Rohingyas from Myanmar, Tamils from Sri Lanka, Jews and atheists. Govt claims Rohingyas and Sri Lankan Tamils are victims of ethnic and not religious persecution
- It violates Article 14, which guarantees Right to Equality
- Human Rights Watch says the law is discriminatory against Muslims
- Citizenship to illegal immigrants may increase job competition, affecting opportunities for locals. It will also create housing and land resource issues
- Critics claim the law has been implemented before elections to polarise voters
- No mechanism for the government to differentiate between illegal migrants and those persecuted
- Research and Analysis Wing says it can be used by foreign intelligence agents to infiltrate legally
- Historians and critics claim CAA and NRC are steps towards creating a Hindu Rashtra
- There is unequal wait times for citizenship based on religion of persecution. For example, a Parsi fleeing persecution from Iran has to wait for 11 years to apply for citizenship, while a Parsi from Afghanistan can apply after 5 years
- 200 petitions against CAA are pending before SC

ANTI-CAA PROTESTS

The passage of the Act triggered protests across India, which led to the arrest of activists and leaders. While some were released, the others are still in jail

Assam saw violent protests. Japan PM's summit was cancelled

6M in Kerala formed human chain; protests broke out in Bengal too

76 Deaths | **750** Injured

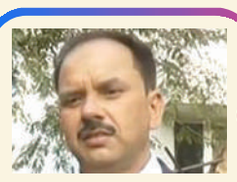
Women protested in Delhi's Shaheen Bagh for 51 days, blocking a highway. JNU, Jamia students also took part. Clashes between students and police led to Delhi riots, killing 42 in 36 hours

Protests were held in B'luru, Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Hyd and Jaipur

Celebrities who joined the protests were Deepika Padukone, Anurag Kashyap, Swara Bhasker, Farhan Akhtar, Manoj Bajpayee, Shabana Azmi, Zeeshan Ayyub and late Sushant Singh Rajput

ARRESTS

Student activist Umar Khalid was arrested in 2020 under UAPA. His bail hearing in SC has been delayed 14 times. He is still in jail without trial



On 26 April, 2020, Jamia alumni Shifa ur-Rehman was arrested for allegedly inciting communal violence. He is still in Tihar Jail, Delhi

Muslim activist Gulfisha Fatima was arrested on 9 April, 2020, for rioting. UN experts called for her release. She is still in Tihar Jail

Assam MLA Akhil Gogoi was arrested by NIA in 2019 and was granted bail after 567 days in jail. He is vocal against Centre over CAA

Md Kafeel Khan, doctor and author, was held in 2019 for "inflammatory speech". He got bail, but was re-arrested under NSA. He was released in 2020

ACQUITTED

BJP leader Vinay Varshney was accused of shooting dead a protester, Mohammad Tariq, in Aligarh. However, he was acquitted on 6 July, 2022

Many BJP leaders were accused of giving hate speeches that led to riots in Delhi. But police did not file any complaint. No action was taken in at least eight complaints. Those named in the complaints include BJP leader Kapil Mishra, Karawal Nagar MLA Mohan Singh Bisht, former Mustafabad MLA Jagdish Pradhan, Baghpat MP Satya Pal Singh, and councillor from Johripur Kanhaiya Lal. Mishra was allegedly accompanied by people carrying guns, swords and tridents to a protest site

NO ACTION AGAINST BJP LEADERS

- Anurag Thakur was accused of exhorting a crowd to "shoot the traitors". Yogi Adityanath allegedly told protesters, "if they don't understand through words, we will make them understand through bullets"
- BJP MP Parvesh Verma allegedly threatened to rape women protesters. Thakur and Verma got EC notice but no action was taken
- In 2020, Tejasvi Surya said in Parliament that days of "Mughal Raj" were not far away for Delhi if "patriotic Indians don't stand up"
- 170 activists sent a letter to PM Narendra Modi over hate speeches made by BJP leaders. Again, no action was taken

BJP MP Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma

Centre notifies CAA after 4 years of passing bill

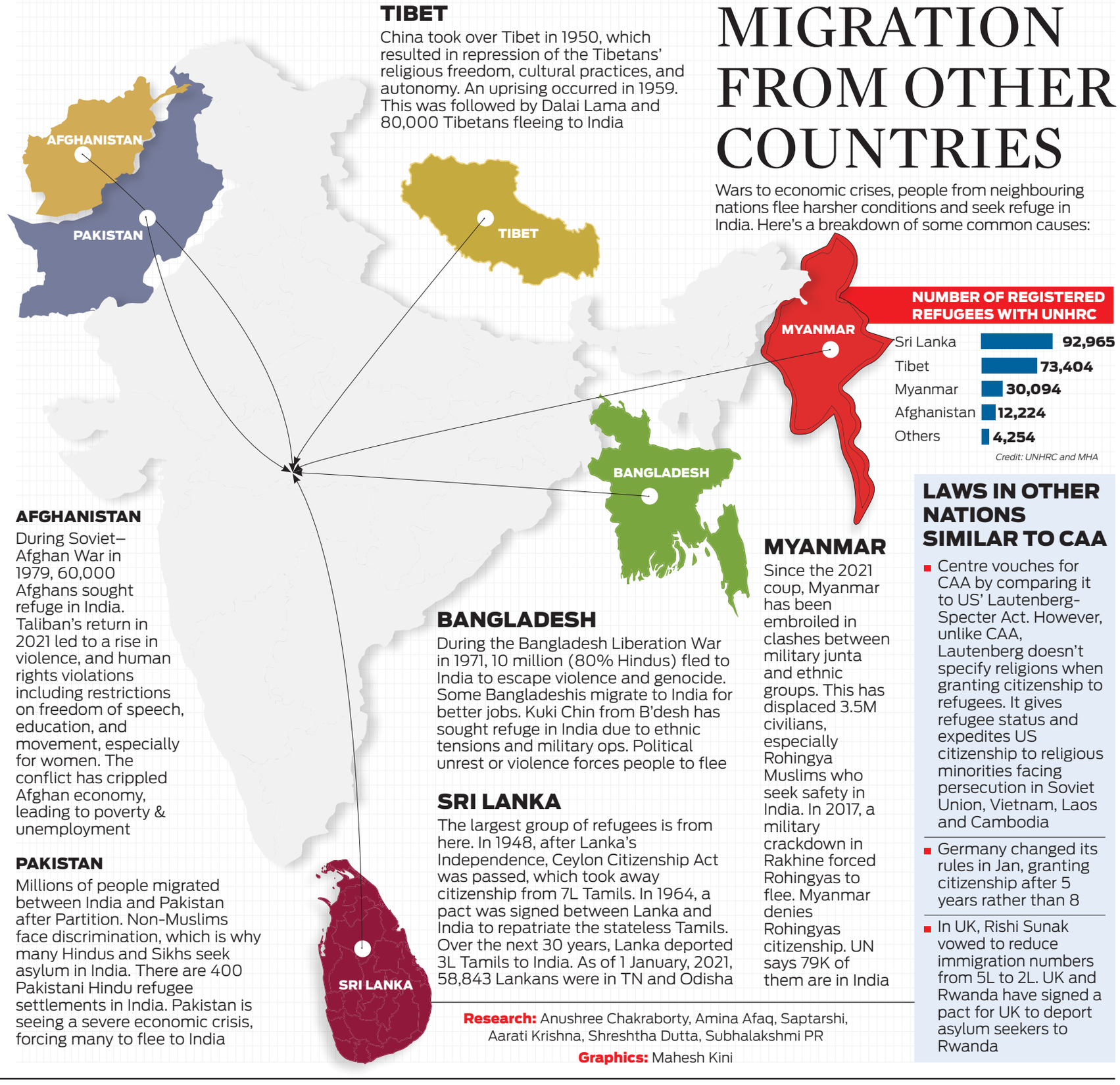
- The Centre notified the rules for CAA on 11 March, 2024, ahead of Lok Sabha polls
- Govt launched a web portal and mobile app — CAA-2019 — for online applications for citizenship
- Soon, protests broke out in Assam but were contained
- Oppn leaders such as Mamata Banerjee said they will protest against CAA; DMK vowed to repeal CAA in their poll manifesto
- Kerala govt, Asaduddin Owaisi moved SC seeking stay on CAA

Documents needed for CAA citizenship

- Passport/ residential permit from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan
- Proof providing ancestry
- Proof of citizenship: Birth/educational certificates, identity document and licences issued by Afghan, B'desh, or Pak govt, land records, PAN Card, bank or post office account records, marriage certificate, insurance policies, employment document

MIGRATION FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Wars to economic crises, people from neighbouring nations flee harsher conditions and seek refuge in India. Here's a breakdown of some common causes:



TIBET

China took over Tibet in 1950, which resulted in repression of the Tibetans' religious freedom, cultural practices, and autonomy. An uprising occurred in 1959. This was followed by Dalai Lama and 80,000 Tibetans fleeing to India

AFGHANISTAN

During Soviet–Afghan War in 1979, 60,000 Afghans sought refuge in India. Taliban's return in 2021 led to a rise in violence, and human rights violations including restrictions on freedom of speech, education, and movement, especially for women. The conflict has crippled Afghan economy, leading to poverty & unemployment

PAKISTAN

Millions of people migrated between India and Pakistan after Partition. Non-Muslims face discrimination, which is why many Hindus and Sikhs seek asylum in India. There are 400 Pakistani Hindu refugee settlements in India. Pakistan is seeing a severe economic crisis, forcing many to flee to India

BANGLADESH

During the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, 10 million (80% Hindus) fled to India to escape violence and genocide. Some Bangladeshis migrate to India for better jobs. Kuki Chin from B'desh has sought refuge in India due to ethnic tensions and military ops. Political unrest or violence forces people to flee

SRI LANKA

The largest group of refugees is from here. In 1948, after Lanka's Independence, Ceylon Citizenship Act was passed, which took away citizenship from 7L Tamils. In 1964, a pact was signed between Lanka and India to repatriate the stateless Tamils. Over the next 30 years, Lanka deported 3L Tamils to India. As of 1 January, 2021, 58,843 Lankans were in TN and Odisha

MYANMAR

Since the 2021 coup, Myanmar has been embroiled in clashes between military junta and ethnic groups. This has displaced 3.5M civilians, especially Rohingya Muslims who seek safety in India. In 2017, a military crackdown in Rakhine forced Rohingyas to flee. Myanmar denies Rohingyas citizenship. UN says 79K of them are in India

NUMBER OF REGISTERED REFUGEES WITH UNHRC

Sri Lanka	92,965
Tibet	73,404
Myanmar	30,094
Afghanistan	12,224
Others	4,254

Credit: UNHRC and MHA

LAWS IN OTHER NATIONS SIMILAR TO CAA

- Centre vouches for CAA by comparing it to US' Lautenberg-Specter Act. However, unlike CAA, Lautenberg doesn't specify religions when granting citizenship to refugees. It gives refugee status and expedites US citizenship to religious minorities facing persecution in Soviet Union, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia
- Germany changed its rules in Jan, granting citizenship after 5 years rather than 8
- In UK, Rishi Sunak vowed to reduce immigration numbers from 5L to 2L. UK and Rwanda have signed a pact for UK to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda

Research: Anushree Chakraborty, Amina Afaq, Saptarshi, Aarati Krishna, Shreshtha Dutta, Subhalakshmi PR

Graphics: Mahesh Kini

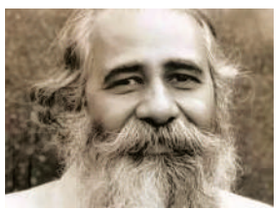


PHOTO: PTI

AAP's founding member Dinesh Vaghela dies at 73

PANAJI, 2 APRIL

Dinesh Vaghela, a founding member of the Aam Aadmi Party, has died in Goa after a brief illness, an AAP leader said on Tuesday. Vaghela, 73, passed away at his residence in Panaji on Monday night, AAP Goa vice president Valmiki Naik said. As per the AAP's official website, Vaghela was a member of the National Executive of the Aam Aadmi Party and one of the earliest members to join the party after the India Against Corruption movement. Originally from Gujarat, he lived in Goa. He headed AAP's disciplinary committee, as per the website.Vaghela's last rites would be held at the St Inez Crematorium near Panaji later in the day, Naik said. *—PTI*

SC pulls up 5 TN babus for skipping ED summons

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Tuesday pulled up five district collectors of Tamil Nadu for not appearing physically before the Enforcement Directorate despite orders in a money laundering probe in connection with alleged illegal sand mining. It directed the officials to appear before the ED personally on 25 April. A bench of Justice Bela M Trivedi and Justice Pankaj Mithal said the officials adopted a "cavalier approach" and the action shows they have no respect for the court, law and the Constitution."This shows that the officers don't have either respect for the court or the law much less the Constitution of India. Such an approach is strongly deprecated," the bench said. Senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Amit Anand Tiwari, appearing for the Tamil Nadu government, said the officials were busy in maintaining public order and implementation of the social security scheme.*—PTI*

FM: DMK spreading false propaganda on Katchatheevu

CHENNAI, 2 APRIL

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday accused the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu of spreading a false campaign on the Katchatheevu islet ceded to Sri Lanka by India in 1974, and for making "irresponsible" statements on the issue. Late M Karunanidhi, who was DMK president and Tamil Nadu chief minister at the time, was aware of the then ruling Congress's move but did not object, she said. The Congress, which failed to come to power in Tamil Nadu after 1967, owes an explanation to the nation for the loss of the territory which former prime minister Indira Gandhi described as a "tiny mass of rock", she said.*—PTI*

Arunachal Cong manifesto focuses on health, edu

ITANAGAR, 2 APRIL

Opposition Congress in Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday released its manifesto ahead of the simultaneous Lok Sabha and assembly polls in the state, focusing on the health and education sectors, besides promising jobs for youths.Releasing the manifesto, Pradesh Congress Committee president Nabam Tuki said it was drafted after due consideration of the views, opinions and grievances of the people. The northeastern state will go to simultaneous polls for two Lok Sabha and 50 assembly constituencies in the first phase on 19 April. The ruling BJP has already won 10 seats in the 60-member assembly, unopposed. Though the Congress had fielded 34 candidates for the assembly polls this year, only 19 candidates remain in the fray. *—PTI*

Atishi says BJP asked her to join it or get arrested

She also claimed ED will raid her as well as her family soon

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Four senior AAP leaders, including herself, would be arrested soon, Delhi minister Atishi said on Tuesday, claiming the BJP approached her through a "very close" person to join it or be prepared to be nabbed by the ED within a month.

At a press conference here, Atishi claimed that she, Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj, MLA Durgesh Pathak and Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha would be arrested.

However, Delhi BJP Chief Virendra Sachdeva claimed that Atishi was "lying". The entire Aam Aadmi Party was involved in the "liquor scam" and its leaders were fighting among themselves over the apprehension about who would be the next "sacrificial lamb", he said.

Atishi further claimed that she had been told that the Enforcement Directorate would conduct raids at her residence and that of her kin in the coming days. After that, summons would be sent and arrests would be made, she claimed.

There is no reason for Arvind Kejriwal to resign as Chief Minister because he has neither been charge-sheeted nor convicted in the excise policy case. Moreover, he enjoys an "overwhelming majority in the Delhi Assembly, she said.

Atishi claimed that she, Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj, MLA Durgesh Pathak, Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha will be arrested *PHOTO: PTI*

Arvind Kejriwal has fooled you: Manjinder Singh Sirsa on Atishi's claims

In reaction to Atishi's allegation that she was approached by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to join them or else she'd be arrested by the Enforcement Directorate, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa said that the only person who has fooled her is Arvind Kejriwal.

Suggesting that Atishi must be under pressure, Sirsa said, "When Arvind Kejriwal gave their names to the Enforcement Directorate (ED), they felt that they are the next in turn because Kejriwal has given them away.

Asking Atishi to reveal the name of her close aide from whom she claims she got the blackmail threat from the BJP. Sirsa said, "Atishi claims that he has gotten a message. She should reveal the name of her close aide so that the ED can arrest him."AAP MLAs on Tuesday met Sunita Kejriwal and asserted that the Delhi Chief Minister should continue to run the government from jail and not step down. Manish Sisodia, on Tuesday told a Delhi court that no purpose will be served by keeping him in jail any further. *—PTI/ANI*

KEJRI RESTLESS IN JAIL, HIS SUGAR LEVEL LOW

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who has been remanded in judicial custody till 15 April in the excise policy case, paced up and down his 14X8 feet cell on his first night in Tihar jail, managing only to sleep for a while, a prison official said.

According to prison officials, Kejriwal was brought to Tihar jail at 4pm on Monday and was medically examined before being sent to his cell where he is staying alone. His sugar level was below 50 at that time and medicines were given to him on the advice of doctors, he said.

India's first sitting Chief Minister to be lodged at Asia's largest prison has been kept in jail number two. His wife and children are likely to meet him on Tuesday, an official said.

Two personnel from Tihar Jail Security and a jail warder have been deployed outside his cell. *—PTI*

'INDIA BLOC SELFISH'

PM: 1st poll where corrupt rallying against corruption

JAIPUR, 2 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday hit out at the opposition IN-DIA bloc and said this is the first Lok Sabha election in which the corrupt are rallying to-gether to stop action on corruption.

He also said Congress leaders are threatening that if the BJP wins, the country will be on fire. "Modi has been extinguishing such fires for the last 10 years," the Prime Minister said while addressing a public rally in Rajasthan's Kotputali.

Speaking about the country's development, Modi said a lot happened in the last 10 years but whatever happened was just a "trailer", a lot still has to be done.

He asserted that the third term of the BJP-led government will be about taking "historic decisions".

"This election is to uproot corruption, to fulfil the dream of self-reliant India, to resolve for the prosperity of the farmers and to provide tap water to every household...but the Con-gress and its INDI Alliance are fighting the elections not for the country but for their own selfish motives," Modi said.

He said this is the first election in which all corrupt people are rallying together to stop action on corruption. I say remove corruption, they say save the corrupt," he said.

He made the remarks days after INDIA bloc held a rally in New Delhi to protest against the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case."Congress people have started showing their dangerous intentions. This election is very important to save the country's future and to make the lives of future generations pros-perous," he said.

He said that this Lok Sabha election is not a normal election, it is an election of the resolve for development of India and making it the third largest economy in the world."This is the first election in which big leaders of the Congress are not talking about winning the polls, but they are threatening that if the BJP wins, the country will be on fire," he said. *—PTI*

Nephew of ex-T'gana CM KCR held in land grab case

HYDERABAD, 2 APRIL

A nephew of former Telangana chief minister and BRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao, was on Tuesday arrested for allegedly attempting to encroach land here, police said.

A case was earlier registered against Chandrasekhar Rao's nephew K Kanna Rao and others in the first week of March at Adibatla police station based on a complaint from a director of a real estate firm who accused them of trying to encroach upon two acres of the company's land after trying to threaten their employees.

He has been arrested in connection with that case and is being sent to judicial remand, a senior police official told PTI.

A First Information Report (FIR) was registered on 3 March against Kanna Rao and others under relevant Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections including 307 (attempt to murder), 147 (rioting), 447 (criminal trespass).

As per the FIR, on 3 March the accused and his associates criminally trespassed into the land, demolished the compound wall and assaulted the caretakers there with stones and rods.

They later set on fire, a hut and container where the caretakers used to stay Incidentally, the BRS chief's daughter, K Kavitha, was arrested recently by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the Delhi Excise Policy scam. *—PTI*

KERALA CM TAKES A JIBE

Congress' actions have 'BJP touch': Vijayan on electoral bonds case

MALAPPURAM, 2 APRIL

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan alleged on Tuesday that the actions of the Congress bore a distinct 'BJP touch,' which became particularly evident in the unfolding details of the electoral bond scam.

Addressing an election meeting organised by the CPI(M)-led LDF at Perinthalmanna in this district, Vijayan, a veteran Marxist leader, described the electoral bond allegations as a "mega scam" and alleged that the BJP played a key role in it.

"The Electoral Bond is a mega scam that unfolded under the watch of the BJP government at the Centre. Initiated by the BJP, the party amassed Rs 8,251 crores through such bonds. However, the BJP cannot be solely blamed; Congress is also complicit, having secured Rs 1,951 crore," he said, continuing his attack against his party's INDIA bloc partner. *—PTI*

Kerala Chief Minister Pinayari Vijayan hit out at Congress for the second time in two days, denting INDIA alliance *PHOTO: X/ @PinarayiVijayan*

RaGa should explain his position: Surendran after SDPI backs Cong

Thiruvananthapuram, 2 April

BJP Kerala President K Surendran has asked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to explain his position on the declaration by Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) to extend unconditional support to the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in the Lok Sabha elections. Referring to SDPI's support for Congress, Surendran said, "Now SDPI has openly declared support for the Congress party in all 20 constituencies." *—PTI*

ODISHA: CONCH BLOWERS IN HIGH DEMAND

BERHAMPUR, 2 APRIL

As elections to the 147-member Odisha Assembly and 21 Lok Sabha seats in the state approaching there are high demands of Conch blowers as "sankha' (conch) is the symbol of the ruling Biju Janata Dal and the regional party candidates start their campaign by blowing conch across the state.

The conch blowers are hired by BJD candidates during the elections to familiarise the voters with the party symbol 'conch' during their campaigning. The BJD candidates in all the 168 constituencies (21 Lok Sabha and 147 assembly segments) require conch blowers during the campaign.

There are around 25,000 conch blowers in Odisha's Ganjam district and most of them are engaged in the election campaign for BJD candidates in different constituencies. "As of now, some candidates have already approached us for their campaign for the elections in the state," Rajendra Prasad Patra, a conch blower from Odisha village said. *—PTI*

BJP announces 112 candidates for Odisha polls

BHUBANESWAR, 2 APRIL

BJP on Tuesday re-nominated 21 of its 22 sitting MLAs in Odisha while announcing the list of candidates for 112 of the 147 Assembly constituencies in the state.

The lone legislator who has been denied BJP ticket was Lalitendu Bidyadhar Mohapatra from Brahmagiri in Puri district. Mohapatra's niece Upasana Mohapatra has got the ticket from Brahmagiri Assembly seat.There are eight women candidates on the list. BJP state President Manmohan Samal will contest from Chandbali assembly segment in Bhadrak district while senior party leader and sitting MP from Bargarh Suresh Pujari will contest from Brajarajnagar Assembly seat. Pujari was denied the party ticket for contesting the Lok Sabha polls this time. The BJP has fielded Sisir Mishra against Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik from Hinjili Assembly constituency while former BJD MP Pratyusha Rajeswari Singh will contest against former minister and sitting MLA Arun Kumar Sahoo in Nayagarh assembly seat. *—PTI*

My victory will undo conspiracy to expel me: Mahua

KOLKATA, 2 APRIL

Exuding confidence in securing her Krishnanagar Lok Sabha seat with a bigger margin, senior TMC leader Mahua Moitra feels that her victory would be a fitting response to the "conspiracy" to expel her from Lok Sabha last year and tarnish her reputation through raids and summons by central agencies in a cash-for-query case.She asserted that despite all efforts by the BJP to "sound the death knell" for constitutional democracy, India is too great a country to be destroyed by the fascists.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a money laundering case against TMC leader Mahua Moitra and businessman Darshan Hiranandani in connection with an alleged cash-for-queries scam case

In an interview with PTI, Moitra said the Election Commission has "lost its independence" since commissioners are hand-picked by a selection committee where the Centre has two-thirds majority.

Mahua Moitra *PHOTO: PTI*

"There is no doubt about my victory. It is about how big the margin will be, which will be decided on 4 June. I live here and have been among my people for the past five years and even before that as an MLA. So there is a very strong connection, and frankly, there is no election mode as such here," she said. *—PTI*

PILOT SAYS INDIA WILL WIN

'BJP shouldn't claim monopoly over Ram'

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Lord Ram belongs to everyone and BJP cannot have a monopoly over him or religion no matter how hard it tries, says senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot, asserting that INDIA bloc will fight the Lok Sabha polls on people's issues rather than emotive ones.

Congress general secretary also exuded confidence that the opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will get a majority and form the next government.

He also claimed BJP was on the "backfoot" and Congress was primed to do "exceedingly well" in the desert state this time after drawing a blank in the last two Lok Sabha elections.

Asked about claims that a Ram temple wave was sweeping North India and INDIA bloc's plans to overcome it, Pilot said, "I think this election will be fought on issues that are extremely relevant to our present and our future. We want to bring to the fore problems faced by the youth, women, farmers, we want to give legal guarantee for MSP, these are the things that matter to average voter."

Cong's Sachin Pilot asks BJP to focus on issues, not religion *PHOTO: PTI*

Pilot said he does not think Indian voter appreciates an election agenda based on religion, Hindu-Muslim, Mandir-Masjid issues, and underscored that polls should be fought on economic policy, job creation, reducing inflation and securing a better future for our farmers.

Asked about Prime Minister Narendra Modi talking about a blueprint for his first 100 days of a third term and the difference in confidence levels of the ruling party and the opposition, Pilot said it is wrong to prejudge the mandate that the people will give. Discussing the party's prospects in Chhattisgarh, he added, the party had not done well there traditionally in the Lok Sabha polls in the past with its best tally being two seats but is on a strong footing this time."I won't give you numbers but we will do quite well in Chhattisgarh and win a majority of the 11 seats of the state," Pilot said. *—PTI*

Sharmila to take on cousin Avinash Reddy in Kadapa

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Andhra Pradesh PCC chief YS Sharmila is pitted against her cousin and sitting YSRCP MP YS Avinash Reddy in Kadapa Lok Sabha segment while former Union Ministers MM Pallam Raju and JD Seelam have been fielded from Ka-kinada and Bapatla constituencies respectively in the 13 May polls.

As per a list of candidates for Lok Sabha elections released by Congress, including five from the state, Gidugu Rudra Raju will be contesting from Rajahmundry.

PG Rampullaiah Yadav will be the party's candidate from Kurnool, according to the list.

Announcing that she is fighting the Lok Sabha elections from Kadapa, Sharmila said this was not an easy decision as she was aware it would lead to a split in her family."I am contesting as a candidate from Kadapa. YSR's (YS Rajasekhar Reddy) daughter is contesting. This is not an easy decision for me as I know that it will split my family," she said,

PHOTO: FB

addressing a press conference in Idupulupaya in Kadapa district after participating in a prayer meeting at her father's grave.She observed that her decision will also throw YSR's fans into confusion but had to take this decision due to some "unavoidable circumstances".

Asserting she had "no hatred" towards her brother, YSRCP chief and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Sharmila said he was a changed man after becoming Chief Minister.The APCC president alleged Jagan Mohan Reddy "encouraged murderous politics" and said, "He gave the ticket to people who murdered YS Vivekananda Reddy and I could not tolerate it." she alleged. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK.COM

3 terror associates arrested in Baramulla

SRINAGAR, 2 APRIL

Security forces on Tuesday arrested three terrorist associates from Sopore area of Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir, police said. A pistol and other incriminating materials were recovered from their possession, a police spokesman said. He said the security forces established a joint checkpoint and noticed three suspicious persons attempting to flee from the spot. "However, the alert party apprehended them tactfully. They are Faisal Ahmad Kachroo, Aquib Mehraj Kana and Adil Akber Gojree," the spokesman said.

6 juveniles assault 2 friends over game, booked

THANE, 2 APRIL

Police have registered an FIR against six juveniles for allegedly assaulting two minor brothers after a dispute while playing a mobile phone game in Thane, an official said on Tuesday. The incident took place at Kashigaon in Bhayander area on 30 March and the victims' father, who is a local auto-rickshaw driver, filed a police complaint on Tuesday. Allegedly a dispute arose between one of the minor siblings and his friend, who belongs to a different community, while they were playing a mobile phone game, leading to a confrontation between the two. The friend then left but later returned with five other juveniles and they allegedly assaulted the siblings, aged 12 and 14, used derogatory language against them and made disrespectful remarks about their deities, as per the FIR.*—PTI*

5 labourers injured as bridge collapses in MP

MORENA, 2 APRIL

Five labourers were injured when a century-old railway bridge on the Kwari river collapsed while it was being dismantled in Madhya Pradesh's Morena on Tuesday, an official said. The incident took place near Sikroda village under Kailaras police station limits. The narrow gauge bridge, more than 100 years old, was being dismantled as the railway line was being converted to broad gauge, Sub Divisional Magistrate Pradeep Tomar said. The labourers were carrying out the work of cutting the iron structure of the old bridge using a gas cutter but it collapsed, injuring five workers, the official said. The five injured people were admitted to the district hospital in Morena, he said. *—PTI*

Man kills woman during rape attempt, gets lifer

THANE, 2 APRIL

A court in Maharashtra's Thane district has sentenced a man to life imprisonment for stabbing a 32-year-old woman to death after she resisted a rape attempt. Additional sessions judge Abhay N Sirsikar found the accused, Babu alias Sameer Gopal Gogawale,29, guilty of charges under sections 452 (house trespass), 302 (murder) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Penal Code and sentenced him to life imprisonment. In an order passed on 30 March, the court also imposed a fine of Rs 3,000 on the accused. Additional public prosecutor Rashmi Kshirsagar informed the court that the victim, Lata alias Rakhi Rahul Shejwal lived with her husband and two sons in the Kopri locality of Thane city. On 2 October, 2016, when the victim's husband and children were away, the accused entered their home, tried to sexually assault her and stabbed her to death when she resisted his advances, the prosecutor said.The victim's husband later rushed home and found her dead.*—PTI*

India raps China's 'senseless attempts' over renaming bid

China renamed 30 places in Arunachal to assert claim on state

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Ministry of External Affairs on Tuesday firmly rejected China's attempt to rename several places in Arunachal Pradesh. It said assigning invented names will "not alter the reality that the state will always be an integral and inalienable part of India.

"China has persisted with its senseless attempts to rename places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh," spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

He was responding to media queries on renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh by China.

China has recently released a list of 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh in a bid to assert its claim over India's northeastern state. India has been rejecting such renaming of places by China.

According to a report in its state run Global Times, Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs released a fourth list of standardised geographical names in Zangnan, the name that China uses for Arunachal Pradesh.

According to the official website of the ministry, 30 additional publicly used place names in the Zangnan region has been officially revealed, the Global times report said.

China released the first list of the standardised names of six places in Zangnan in 2017 *Photo: PTI*

China released the first list of the standardised names of six places in Zangnan in 2017, while the second list of 15 places was issued in 2021 followed by another list with names for 11 places in 2023.

Set to take effect from 1 May, 2024, the implementation measures stipulate in Article 13 that "place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorization," the Global Times report said.

India has repeatedly rebuffed such attempts by China to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh.

On Monday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that changing names won't have any effect and the northeastern state was, is and will always be India's part.

While addressing a press conference in Gujarat, Jaishankar said, "If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always be a state of India. Changing names does not have an effect."

On 28 March, reiterating that Arunachal Pradesh is an "integral and inalienable part of India," the Ministry of External Affairs said that China may repeat its "baseless claims" as many times as they want but that will not change the position. *—PTI*

- According to a report in its state run Global Times, Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs released a fourth list of standardised geographical names in Zangnan, the name that China uses for Arunachal Pradesh.

MUM ON GUIDELINES

The court said its order required disclosure, specifically of all details of the bonds *IMAGE SOURCE : PTI*

In RTI reply, SBI refuses to share info on electoral bonds

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The State Bank of India (SBI) has refused to disclose its standard operating procedure for the sale and redemption of the electoral bonds that were issued to its authorised branches, citing the exemption given under "commercial confidence", according to an RTI response.

In an application filed under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, transparency activist Anjali Bhardwaj had sought the details of the standard operating procedure issued to the SBI's authorised branches on the sale and redemption of the electoral bonds.

"Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of Electoral Bond Scheme-2018 issued to authorised branches from time to time are internal guidelines with regard to sale and redemption of electoral bonds (meant for internal circulation only), which is exempted under section 8(1)(d) of the Right to Information Act," the response from M Kanna Babu, the central public information officer and deputy general manager of the SBI, said on 30 March.

Section 8(1)(d) of the Act exempts from revelation "information including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party unless the competent authority is satisfied that larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information".

"It is shocking to note that even after the Supreme Court has struck down the electoral bonds scheme as unconstitutional and explicitly directed and ensured disclosure of all details of the EBs purchased and redeemed, the SBI continues to deny important information about the operation of the electoral bonds scheme," Bhardwaj said.

She said the SOPs would reveal the official instructions governing the particulars of information that were to be stored as well as the form and manner in which information was to be maintained by the bank on the sale and redemption of the electoral bonds.

The court said its order required disclosure, specifically of all details of the bonds, including the names of the purchaser, the amounts and the dates of purchase. *—PTI*

UP IN SMOKE

Firefighters attempt to douse a fire that broke out at a chemical plant, in Navi Mumbai, on Tuesday. There were no casualties *PHOTO: PTI*

SC closes proceedings on Ansari's appeal against conviction

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Taking note of Mukhtar Ansari's death, Supreme Court on Tuesday closed its proceedings on a plea filed by the jailed gangster-turned-politician against an order of the Allahabad High Court sentencing him to five-year jail term in a 24-year-old case.

"The petitioner is no more. The proceedings shall be abated," said the bench comprising justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal after taking note of the statement that Ansari died.

On March 28, Ansari died of cardiac arrest at a hospital in Banda in Uttar Pradesh.

Last year on 13 October, the top court had sought the response of the Uttar Pradesh government on Ansari's appeal against High Court order.

Prior to this, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on September 23 had overturned Ansari's acquittal and sentenced him to a five-year jail term in a case related to the Gangster Act.

High Court had also imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on Ansari as it overturned the acquittal order by a special MP-MLA court in 2020.

The late gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari *PHOTO: PTI*

- On March 28, Ansari died of cardiac arrest at a hospital in Banda in Uttar Pradesh. Last year on 13 October, the top court had sought the response of the Uttar Pradesh government on Ansari's appeal against the High Court order.

The FIR was lodged with Lucknow's Hazratganj police in 1999 under the Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act.

A special court had acquitted Ansari in 2020. The state filed an appeal against acquittal in 2021. *—PTI*

JNU student on strike after 'inaction' over sexual harassment compliant

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

A female student at the Jawaharlal Nehru University has started an indefinite strike at the main gate of the campus. She is alleging inaction by its administration over her sexual harassment complaint against four people.

She alleged that she was sexually harassed on the night of 31 March on the campus by four people, including two former students. The university administration has ordered an inquiry into the incident.

The complainant, however, claimed that the "perpetrators" of the crime were roaming around freely.

The university, meanwhile, said it was following the due process.

"It must be known that the person who harassed me and my friend resides in the same hostel as I do, and I am expected to go into the same hostel, the same corridors, the same mess, to face that person who has caused me such mental harassment."

The student demanded the immediate restrainment of one of the accused from Sabarmati Hostel, cancellation of the registration of the accused, out-of-bound order for the former students and steps to ensure safety her safety, as well as that of her friends.

The purported incident took place when the complainant and a friend were taking a walk near the JNU Ring Road around 2 am, a university official said.

They were allegedly followed by four people in a car. These people allegedly sexually harassed the female student, the official said.

The Left-led students' union has alleged that the four people, including the two former students, belong to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)-affiliated Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

The ABVP, however, denied the allegation and claimed that it was being falsely implicated. *—PTI*

40 passengers injured as bus overturns in MP

MORENA, 2 APRIL

Nearly 40 passengers were injured when a private bus they were travelling in overturned near Madhya Pradesh's Morena town in the wee hours of Tuesday, an official said. The incident took place between 1am and 2am when the passengers were heading to the Mehandipur Balaji Temple in Rajasthan from Gwalior in MP.

The bus driver apparently lost control over the wheels, following which the vehicle overturned near a canal in Sikroda area, 12km from Morena town, the official said. *—PTI*

India will soon get UNSC permanent seat, says EAM

RAJKOT, 2 APRIL

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday expressed optimism about India's eventual permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). He said it is inevitable but emphasised the need for heightened efforts in this regard. Addressing intellectuals in Gujarat's Rajkot, he stressed that diligent work is essential to secure this coveted position.

Acknowledging the current dominance of five nations - China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US - as the UN's original permanent members, he, however, said the international momentum was now favouring India's bid for a permanent seat. The United Nations was formed around 80 years ago, and these five nations decided among themselves to become permanent members of its security council, Jaishankar said. He highlighted the historical context of the UNSC's formation, where five nations secured permanent membership, underscoring the evolving global landscape with around 193 countries today. "But these five nations have kept their control, and it is strange that you have to ask them to give us their consent for a change. A few agree, a few others put forward their position with honesty, while others do something from behind," he said. *—PTI*

WRESTLERS' PROTEST

HC seeks Centre's clear stand on WFI

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Delhi High Court asked Centre on Tuesday to file an affidavit stating its "clear stand" as regards managing Wrestling Federation of India's (WFI) affairs after the dissolution of the Indian Olympic Association's (IOA) ad-hoc committee running the suspended body.

Dealing with a petition filed by wrestlers Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik and her husband Satyawart Kadian, Justice Sachin Datta also asked the IOA to file an affidavit indicating the circumstances in which it decided to dissolve the ad-hoc committee last month.

Represented in the court by senior advocate Rahul Mehra, the petitioners argued that it was imperative that an administrator be appointed to run the affairs of the suspended federation, which has been rendered "headless" on account of the disbandment of the ad-hoc committee.

The ad-hoc committee was formed in December last year after the sports ministry suspended WFI.

The petitioners -- who were at the forefront demandedWFI chief and BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh for the alleged sexual harassment of seven women grapplers -- moved the high court earlier this year to get the elections held by the federation set aside.

Vinesh Phogat *PHOTO: PTI*

On 4 March, the court issued notices to Centre, WFI and the ad-hoc committee on the petition filed by the top grapplers against the recently-held wrestling body elections.

The petitioners have also sought a direction to the ad-hoc committee to continue administering the day-to-day affairs and management of the WFI or, in the alternative, appoint a retired Supreme Court judge as an administrator to take over the affairs and management of the body.

The matter would next be heard on 10 April. *—PTI*

VOTING AWARENESS

A hot air balloon put up to raise voting awareness, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, at Chaibasa in West Singhbhum district. ***PHOTO: PTI***

Is climate change affecting Muslims during Ramadan?

Every Ramadan, volunteers at Westall Mosque and OneSpace in Melbourne hold free weekly iftars (communal dinners to break the fast in Ramadan). This year, volunteers say numbers are up.

To cut down on the resulting landfill, attendees are asked to bring their own reusable food containers and water bottles. In dedicated bins, bottles and cans are collected and recycled under the state government's container deposit scheme - adding A$12 to A$25 every weekend to each mosque's coffers, volunteers say.

Many of the attendees are international students from Indonesia or Malaysia. Living away from their families, paying high tuition fees, and juggling precarious work with studies, they represent a segment of Australian society particularly hard hit by rising costs of living. These include a jump in food prices stemming from global warming-induced crop failures.

A 1,400 year old fasting tradition continues in a world with changing climate ***PHOTO: ANI***

Food insecurity all year round

Like members of Australia's other Islamic communities, Melbourne Muslims of Indonesian background make up a privileged minority, living in a prosperous, peaceful country.

Muslims in other parts of the world face exacerbated challenges. Several of the countries thought to be the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are countries with Muslim majority populations (such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan).

In the Middle East and North Africa where Muslim majority countries abound, the World Food Program describes a "persistent food security crisis".

In this region devastated by conflict and climate change, the World Food Program says the practice of abstaining from food (temporarily, as a religious tradition) has become an ongoing reality for millions throughout the year.

Food insecurity is made worse in the Middle East and North Africa by the aridity of the region, which contains 12 of the world's driest countries. These include Algeria, Bahrain, Qatar, the Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Yemen.

With forecast reductions in rainfall predicted to decimate the gross domestic product (GDP) of Middle Eastern countries, climate change represents a critical threat to these countries.

Extreme weather driving extreme losses

Food insecurity and water scarcity aren't the only ways in which the effects of climate change are felt in Ramadan.

Increasing temperatures have led to the forcible displacement of communities from extreme weather incidents such as storms, wildfires and flooding.

In 2022, flooding in Pakistan destroyed water systems and forced more than five million people to rely on ponds and wells. This contributed to a rise in disease as this water was contaminated.

Heatwaves during times of fasting can also prove fatal. In 2018, dozens of people died, also in Pakistan, amid sweltering temperatures at the start of Ramadan.

After an extreme weather incident, a conflict-afflicted country will shoulder four times the hit to its gross domestic product, compared to a stable country.

Permanent GDP losses of 5.5 per cent have been recorded in Central Asia and just over 1% in the Middle East and North Africa, following climate disasters.

Over time, extreme weather events such as flooding in Bangladesh impact the production of necessities.

At a practical level, the loss of income that results when entire towns are swept away affects local economies during Ramadan and beyond, as survivors spend less, and opt for more frugal celebrations.

Greening' Ramadan

Wealthier countries, in general, are better equipped to mitigate climate change impacts.

In the global south there's been a push for "greening" Ramadan, and for environmentally sustainable practices to be incorporated into daily Muslim life.

Mosques like Masjid Salman on an Indonesian university campus have incorporated tissue-less and water-efficient areas for wudhu (the ritual ablutions before prayer).

She's tried to implement a plastic-free lifestyle in a country where sustainability is just beginning to be embraced.

""I hate composting - it's so much easier to chuck it all in the bin and off it gets collected by the garbage truck, but if I can do it, anyone can."

In the meantime, a 1,400 year old fasting tradition continues in a world with a changing climate. Despite centuries of Ramadan, Muslims now practice their faith amid very modern environmental challenges.

—The Conversation

LETTERS write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR سالار

Migrant workers in Odisha are unable to cast ballot

With the general election looming in the coming months, a growing concern has emerged regarding the participation of thousands of Odisha's migrant workers in the electoral process. Government records, reflecting the registration of migrant returnees following the declaration of Covid-19 lockdown, revealed a stark reality in Nuapada district.

According to data entry operator of the state health department who registered the returnees, approximately 50 per cent of the district's main workers — around 75,000 in numbers — are migrant labourers who venture out every year to different corners of the country in search of employment.

Analysing this data further uncovers a troubling fact: Around 63,000 of these workers are eligible voters, with the majority unlikely to return to their villages to cast their votes.

While the villagers ensure their participation in the village Panchayati polls, the enthusiasm is missing during the Lok Sabha elections.

Mohanlal Chinda is a voter in Khurd Sikuan village, Khariar Constituency. He is employed in a brick kiln in Andhra Pradesh. "I wish I could return to my village and vote, but it is not possible. First, my employer would not allow it, and second, I need at least Rs 2,000 for the trip. Who would provide this amount and convince my owner to allow me to leave?" he asked.

Bipin Suna, 45,of Alim Village of Narla block, Kalahandi district is willing to spare the money to travel back home. Suna went to Kochi, Kerala, with six other workers last December to work on a construction site. "I will pinch pennies to make the trip back home. The villagers had a meeting in the village before the election to decide who to vote for," he said.

- Approximately 50 per cent of the district's main workers — around 75,000 in numbers — are migrant labourers who venture out every year to different corners of the country in search of employment

Suna also claimed to be a prominent figure in his village and stated that his presence was required during voting. "But no party leader has contacted me yet," he added.

Jugeswar Nag from Mahagaon village in the same block was one of the people who accompanied Suna to Kochi. He doesn't agree with Suna about returning home to vote.

"I am 63 years old. A government official my age enjoys his retirement at home, but the poor have no choice but to travel far away to support their families. Why should I spend Rs 2,000 to go to the village only to cast my vote?" Nag questioned.

In Kampur village in Nuapada, out of total 1,200 voters, over 100 are working in different states at brick kilns, construction sites, sawmills and cloth mills. Hath Hamir Singh Deo, a village leader, says none of them will be able to vote.

"Migrant labourers lose their voting rights because the current voting system does not allow them to vote by mail. If such a provision had existed, it would have encouraged migrants to vote," said Hitesh Bagartti, a Bharatiya Janata Party leader. He is also a former member of the Odisha Legislative Assembly from Khariar.

Bagartti said he was approached by 21 migrant workers of Ghatmal Gram Panchayat of Nuapada district working in a brick kiln in Sangareddy district of Telangana for help returning for voting.

"More than 200,000 migrant workers leave Balangir district each year, half of whom are eligible voters. Sadly, they won't be able to join in the grand festival of our democracy," said advocate Bishnu Sharma, Kantabanji city. He has been involved in addressing migrant issues for the past twenty years.

"I had drawn the attention of the Election Commission during the last general election to issue directions to the district authorities to arrange for migrants to return and vote. The district collector, Bolangir, had appealed to the labour contractors, which resulted in the return of about 7,000 migrants to cast their votes," added Sharma.

The advocate recommended that destination state governments register migrants, particularly those in industries like brick kilns and instruct employers to grant leave and offer financial support for travel to vote.

—Downtoearth

Around 63,000 workers are eligible voters who are unable to return home ***PHOTO: X/ @DOWN2EARTHINDIA***

Katchatheevu: Lankan island sparks political row in India

A small, uninhabited island that is part of Sri Lanka has sparked a political row weeks before general elections kick off.

Katchatheevu - a strip of land spanning just about 1.9 sq km (0.7 sq miles) - is located in Palk Strait, a stretch of ocean which divides India and Sri Lanka. It lies to the northeast to Rameswaram town in Tamil Nadu and to the southwest of Sri Lanka's Jaffna city.

The island has no source of drinking water and the only structure on it is a church which holds an annual three-day festival that draws devotees from both India and Sri Lanka.

Since 1921, rulers in both India and Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) - British colonies at the time - had staked claim to fishing rights in the waters around Katchatheevu. But in 1974, India ended the dispute by relinquishing any claim over the island; two years later, India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement that prevented people from both countries from fishing in waters belonging to each other.

Now, that decades-old decision is in the headlines again after India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the country's Opposition Congress party - which was in power at the time - of "callously" giving away the island to Sri Lanka. Congress has reacted sharply, accusing Modi of raking up the issue ahead of elections due to "desperation".

- In 1974, when Indira Gandhi was prime minister, the Indian government ended the dispute with Sri Lanka over the island. Since then political parties have raised their concerns

The ostensible trigger for the controversy is new information accessed by a leader from Modi's BJP about the debates within the federal government about Katchatheevu in the 1960s.

But Opposition leaders say BJP is trying to turn Katchatheevu - a sensitive issue in Tamil Nadu - into a controversy to gain votes in the southern state, where it has been trying hard to make inroads. Tamil Nadu will vote in the first phase of the general election on 19 April.

The controversy began on Sunday when Modi shared an article on X saying, "Eye opening and startling! New facts reveal how Congress callously gave away Katchatheevu."

In 2013, Indian govt told SC that it could not retrieve Katchatheevu from Sri Lanka ***PHOTO: BBC***

The article quoted documents obtained by K Annamalai, Chief of BJP in Tamil Nadu, under a law which allows Indians to access information from the government.

The documents quoted Jawaharlal Nehru, India's prime minister at the time, saying that he attached "no importance at all to [Katchatheevu]" and that he "would have no hesitation in giving up [India's] claims to it".

But according to the report, some officials from the ministry of external affairs and other experts said that India had a "good legal case" to assert claim over Katchatheevu as they claimed the island was ruled by an Indian king "continuously and uninterruptedly" between 1875 and 1948.

In 1974, when Indira Gandhi was prime minister, the Indian government ended the dispute with Sri Lanka over the island.

Since then, political parties in Tamil Nadu have regularly raised the issue of Katchatheevu and filed cases in court challenging the agreement with Sri Lanka - two of these cases are pending in the Supreme Court. Fishermen from Tamil Nadu have often been arrested by Sri Lankan authorities when entering the country's waters, including around Katchatheevu, so the issue often makes headlines there.

After Modi's post, many BJP leaders and federal ministers joined him in criticising Congress. They also said Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) - which currently governs Tamil Nadu and was also in power in 1974 - did not do enough to retain Katchatheevu. DMK has denied this, saying they were not aware of the decision to relinquish claim over the island until the agreement was completed.

"DMK had written several letters to the foreign ministry over the past many decades, upholding the rights of Tamil Nadu's fisher people over Katchatheevu. BJP woke up to the issue only now, just as elections are nearing," DMK spokesperson Saravanan Annadurai said.

Even India's foreign minister, S Jaishankar held a press conference, saying that the issue had been "hidden too long from the gaze of the public".

In 2013, the Indian government had told Supreme Court that it could not "retrieve" Katchatheevu from Sri Lanka as "no territory belonging to India was ceded nor sovereignty relinquished since the area was in dispute and had never been demarcated".

And the next year, former attorney general Mukul Rohatgi, representing Modi's government, told the court that if India wanted Katchatheevu, it would have to "go to war" to get it.

Annamalai, however, has told reporters that the federal government was trying to "bring back" Katchatheevu to protect the interests of Tamil Nadu's fisher people.

A Sri Lankan minister told that the country has not received any "official communication" from India about control over Katchatheevu.

"As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, Katchatheevu island falls within the Sri Lankan line of control," said Jeevan Thondaman.

—BBC News

PHOTO: X/BI

8 suspected migrants killed in Albanian car crash

TIRANA, 2 APRIL

A car crashed into a river in Southeastern Albania, killing all eight people on board, including seven suspected migrants and a local driver, Albanian police said Tuesday. The driver of the vehicle lost control and veered into the Vjosa River about 240 kilometres (150 miles) southeast of the capital, Tirana, around 4 a.m. on Tuesday, according to a police statement. Seven of the victims were suspected to be "from third countries," it said, using a description police often use to refer to migrants. Albania is not a primary route for migrants but small groups from Arab countries or Asia use it to reach Italy by sea or other neighbouring countries by land. In 2019, Albania became the first non-EU member country to have officers of the bloc's border agency Frontex to manage its borders in the south and east, which migrants usually cross, and fight cross-border crime.

—AP

Finland shooting: Child dead and two wounded

HELSINKI, 2 APRIL

A shooting at a school in southern Finland wounded two children and killed one on Tuesday and police said a suspect was detained. Police said they received an alert at 09:08 am over a shooting incident at a lower secondary school with some 800 pupils in the city of Vantaa, just outside the capital, Helsinki. The Finnish newspaper Ilta-Sanomat said the suspect was caught in the Helsinki area later Tuesday.

—AP

'Indo-Pak relations could be improved after polls in India'

ISLAMABAD, 2 APRIL

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has expressed hope for the betterment of ties with India after the general elections in the neighbouring country. Asif's comments came days after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in Singapore said that Pakistan is sponsoring terrorism almost at an "industry level" and the mood in India now is not to overlook terrorists and it "will not skirt this problem anymore". "Our relations with India could be improved after elections there," Asif said while speaking to reporters outside the Parliament House in Islamabad on Monday, adding that the bilateral ties between the two countries have their "own background". Voting for 543 Lok Sabha seats in India will take place between 19 April and 4 June, spread across seven phases. Islamabad and New Delhi have a long history of strained relations, primarily due to the Kashmir issue as well as the cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

—PTI

7 Gaza food aid workers killed in Israeli strike

3 aid ships arrived on Monday carrying some 400 tons of food

The body of a person wearing World Central Kitchen t-shirt lies at Al-Aqsa hospital in Gaza **PHOTO: AP**

DEIR AL-BALAH, 2 APRIL

An apparent Israeli airstrike killed six international aid workers with the World Central Kitchen charity and their Palestinian driver, the aid group said Tuesday, hours after it brought a new shipload of food into northern Gaza, which has been isolated and pushed to the brink of famine by Israel's offensive.

Footage showed the bodies of the dead at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah. Several of them wore protective gear with the charity's logo. The food charity founded by celebrity chef José Andrés said early Tuesday that the seven killed include citizens of Australia, Poland, the United Kingdom and a US-Canada dual citizen. "This is a tragedy. Humanitarian aid workers and civilians should NEVER be a target. EVER," WCK spokeswoman Linda Roth said in a statement. The source of fire late Monday could not be independently confirmed. The Israeli military said it was conducting a review "to understand the circumstances of this tragic incident."

"Despite coordinating movements with the (Israeli army), the convoy was hit as it was leaving the Deir al-Balah warehouse," in central Gaza, the group said in a statement. It said the team had unloaded more than 100 tons of humanitarian food aid brought to Gaza on the maritime route.

Three aid ships from Cyprus arrived earlier Monday carrying some 400 tons of food and supplies organized by the charity and the United Arab Emirates, the group's second shipment after a pilot run last month. The Israeli military was involved in coordinating both deliveries.

The US has touted the sea route as a new way to deliver desperately needed aid to northern Gaza, where the UN has said much of the population is on the brink of starvation, largely cut off from the rest of the territory by Israeli forces.

—AP

Israel to shut down Al Jazeera's Op

JERUSALEM, 2 APRIL

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday vowed to shut down Al Jazeera's operations in Israel, calling it a "terror channel" that spreads incitement, after parliament passed a law clearing the way for the closure. Netanyahu's pledge escalated Israel's long-running feud against Al Jazeera. It also threatened to heighten tensions with Qatar, which owns the channel, at a time when the Doha government is playing a key role in mediation efforts to halt the war in Gaza. The broadcaster condemned Netanyahu's incitement claim as a "dangerous ludicrous lie."

—AP

Gangs launched an armed attack, clashing with police **PHOTO: ANADOLU**

Soaring violence in Haiti leads to heavy gunfire

PORT-AU-PRINCE, 2 APRIL

Violence has flared again in Haiti, with gangs engaging in running gun battles with police, as the effort to push forward with a political solution to the crisis drags on.

Gangs launched an armed attack, clashing with police in, Port-au-Prince. The violence came as Prime Minister Ariel Henry appeared to question the promised establishment of a transitional council, planned to oversee the instalment of a new government.

Witnesses said gunfire broke out in the area of Champ de Mars, a big public park near the national palace, which is the presidential residence. The renewed violence, following weeks of chaos, ignited panic among residents.

At least five people were reported to have been killed around the city overnight, while scores were trapped for hours in the city centre. At least four police officers were reported to have been wounded. Local media reports said police were forced to flee an armoured vehicle, which was then set on fire by the gangs.

The violence flared as outgoing Prime Minister Ariel Henry cast doubt upon the promised formation of a broad transitional council. Racked for decades by poverty, natural disasters, political instability and gang violence, Haiti has had no president since the assassination of Jovenel Moise in 2021 and it has no sitting parliament. It descended into chaos in late February, when the country's powerful armed gangs launched a campaign of violence, attacking police stations, prisons, and the airport.

—Al Jazeera

Iran accuses Israel of killing generals in Syria strike

TEHRAN, 2 APRIL

Iran and one of its key proxies vowed Tuesday to respond to a strike widely attributed to Israel that demolished Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital of Damascus and killed eight people, including two Iranian generals.

Iran's state TV reported Tuesday that the country's Supreme National Security Council, a key decision-making body, met late Monday and decided on a "required" response to the strike. The report said the meeting was chaired by President Ebrahim Raisi, but provided no further details.

"We will make them regretful about the crime and similar acts," said Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all matters of state in Iran. Israel has repeatedly targeted military officials from Iran, which supports militant groups fighting Israel in Gaza, and along its border with Lebanon. Monday's strike in Damascus signaled an escalation because it struck an Iranian diplomatic mission. It was not clear if Iran would respond itself, risking a dangerous confrontation with Israel and its ally the United States, or if it would continue to rely on proxies, including Lebanon's Hezbollah militia and Houthi rebels.

—AP

Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei said Israel has repeatedly targeted military officials from Iran **PHOTO: BBC SCREENGRAB**

Trump posts $175M bond in New York civil fraud case

NEW YORK, 2 APRIL

Former US president Donald Trump has posted a USD 175 million bond as he appeals the judgement against him in the New York civil fraud case brought by state Attorney General Letitia James, CNN reported on Tuesday.

With the submission of bonds, it will pause any action that Attorney General James could take against Donald Trump's properties in response to the judgement until at least September, when the state appeals court also set a schedule to hear his appeal of the USD 464 million verdicts against him.

The bond has been underwritten by Knight Specialty Insurance, a California-based insurance company, but the court document does not list the collateral that Trump used to secure the bond. Last month, Trump said at a news conference he would use cash to cover the bond, but claimed that he also wanted to use cash to fund his re-election campaign. The bond amount was lowered by several hundred million dollars by a state appeals court last month after Trump's attorneys argued that covering the full bond on the USD 464 million verdict against him was not feasible.

In January, Judge Arthur Engoron fined Trump and his co-defendants, including his adult sons and his company, USD 464 million, finding they fraudulently inflated the value of the former president's assets to obtain better loan rates.

—ANI

Taiwan detects 7 Chinese vessels, six aircrafts

TAIPEI, 2 APRIL

Taiwan tracked seven Chinese naval vessels and six military aircraft around the nation amid escalating cross-strait tensions on Tuesday, Taiwan News reported.

In an official post on 'X,' Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) said, "6 PLA aircraft and 7 PLAN vessels around Taiwan were detected by 6 am (UTC+8) today. 2 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and employed appropriate forces to respond." According to MND, "Of the six People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, two crossed the Taiwan Strait median line."

—ANI

TRUST IN POLITICS DECLINES

Polling underway for 30 vacant Senate seats in Pak

ISLAMABAD, 2 APRIL

Polling was underway on Tuesday in Pakistan to elect 30 senators after their seats in the upper house of Parliament became vacant last month.

At least 52 members of the Senate fell vacant in March after the incumbents retired after a six-year term. The Senate comprises 96 members, including 23 each from four provinces and four from the federal capital region of Islamabad. Those from provinces are elected by the respective provincial assemblies while the National Assembly elects one Senator from the Islamabad region.

The Senate is a continuous body as half of its members retire after three years and new ones are elected. The Election Commission of Pakistan had announced plans to hold polls on 48 seats as four seats of senators who were elected from tribal regions were abolished after the region was merged with the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of the country.

Before the merger, eight senators were elected from the federally administered tribal areas called Fata.

Already 18 senators were elected unopposed, including all 11 senators from the Balochistan province and the rest from Punjab and Sindh.

Polling began at 9 am and will continue till 4 pm without any break. Polling was being held at the National Assembly hall for the election of two senators.

Ishaq Dar of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, part of the ruling coalition, and Raja Ansar Kayani of Sunni Ittehad Council, a major Opposition party, are vying for the technocrat seat while for the general seat, the competition is between Rana Mahmood ul Hassan of Pakistan Peoples Party, supporting the ruling coalition, and Farzand Hussain Shah of Sunni Ittehad Council.

—PTI

At least 52 members of the Senate fell vacant in March after the incumbents retired after a six-year term **PHOTO: PTI**

- Election Commission of had announced plans to hold polls on 48 seats as four seats of senators who were elected from tribal regions were abolished after the region was merged with the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province

BALTIMORE BRIDGE COLLAPSE

Channel opened for vessels clearing wreckage

Officials said the temporary channel is open primarily to vessels that are helping with the cleanup effort **PHOTO: PTI/ AP**

BALTIMORE, 2 APRIL

The US Coast Guard has opened a temporary, alternate channel for vessels involved in clearing debris from the collapsed Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, part of a phased approach to opening the main shipping channel leading to the vital port, officials said Monday. Crews are undertaking the complicated work of removing steel and concrete at the site of the bridge's deadly collapse after a container ship lost power and crashed into a supporting column. On Sunday, dive teams surveyed parts of the bridge and checked the ship, and workers in lifts used torches to cut above-water parts of the twisted steel superstructure.

Officials said the temporary channel is open primarily to vessels that are helping with the cleanup effort. Some barges and tugs that have been stuck in the Port of Baltimore since the collapse are also scheduled to pass through the channel.

—AP

Crew to remain on board till probe is done

NEW YORK, 2 APRIL

The crew of 20 Indians and a Sri Lankan of the crippled container vessel that collided with a key Baltimore bridge last week is "busy with their normal duties" and will remain on board until the investigation into the accident is completed, the company that owns the vessel has said. The container vessel Dali collided with the 2.6-km-long four-lane Francis Scott Key Bridge over the Patapsco River in Baltimore in the early hours of 26 March.

—PTI

REPORT REVEALS

Kids in Pak deprived of basic education

BALOCHISTAN, 2 APRIL

Despite one month passed since the beginning of the academic year, unfortunately, essential items such as textbooks and stationery have not yet reached the dilapidated schools of Balochistan in Pakistan, The Balochistan Post reported citing the central spokesperson of Baloch Students Organisation (BSO). The spokesperson said in a statement that thousands of students go to school daily only to return disappointed due to non-commencement of educational activities.

The Balochistan Post reported citing reports from local media, that almost all children in the Balanosh area of Chagai district are out of school.

In the 21st century, where the rest of the world has made significant progress, the children of Balochistan are deprived of education. This deprivation of education serves as tangible evidence of the state's deliberate efforts to keep the Baloch people marginalized, BSO statement read.

BSO said all children in the Balanosh area of Chagai district are out of school **PHOTO: UNICEF**

Similarly, according to some media reports, around three dozen schools in Jhal Magsi are closed, leaving the children of these areas deprived of school education. Meanwhile, teachers and other staff are receiving salaries while sitting at home. Jhal Magsi is counted among the most neglected districts of Balochistan, where the helpless population has been at the mercy of the state and its negligence for a long time, the spokesperson said.

Furthermore, the organization, through a press release, urges the provincial government and relevant authorities to swiftly resolve the aforementioned issues. Otherwise, BSO will initiate protest movements throughout Balochistan, The Balochistan Post reported.

Earlier on 29 March, Baloch Human Rights Council leaders, human rights activists, and press personnel highlighted the severe deterioration of human rights situation in Balochistan and the atrocities inflicted by the Pakistani administration upon the Baloch community.

—ANI

VISTARA CRISIS: DGCA SEEKS DAILY REPORTS

Many Vistara flights are either cancelled or delayed

NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

DGCA has asked Vistara to look after passengers and check cancellations *PHOTO: PTI*

Aviation watchdog DGCA has asked Vistara to submit a daily report on flight cancellations and delays, and the situation is also being monitored by the civil aviation ministry, amid non-availability of pilots causing flight disruptions for the airline.

A day after the carrier announced reducing operations due to non-availability of crew and other operational reasons, sources on Tuesday said some commanders as well as first officers of its A320 fleet are also reporting sick to protest pay revisions due to signing of new contracts.

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Tuesday said in view of various flight disruptions of Vistara, it has asked the airline to submit daily information and details on the flights that are being cancelled and delayed. The officials of the DGCA are also monitoring the situation to ensure compliance with requirements for providing facilities to passengers in case of flight cancellations and delays. On Tuesday, the civil aviation ministry said it is monitoring the situation of Vistara flight cancellations.

Many passengers have taken to social media to complain about flight delays and cancellations. Many first officers of Vistara's A320 fleet have been reporting sick in the past few weeks and on Monday alone, around 50 flights were cancelled and many were delayed as there were not enough pilots to operate flights.

Amid turbulence, 15 pilots quit Vistara

As a section of Vistara pilots continue to protest against pay revision, at least 15 senior first officers resigned from the airline recently, sources said on tuesday.

The airline operates a little over 300 flights daily and has a fleet of 70 planes comprising A320-family aircraft and Boeing 787s.

The sources said at least 15 senior first officers resigned from Vistara and joined a domestic budget carrier. *—PTI*

SENSEX DOWN 110 POINTS

Stock markets snap 3-day winning run

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

Stock markets snapped the three-day gaining run on Tuesday with benchmark Sensex dropping by 110 points due to profit-taking in select private bank and auto shares amid weak trends from the US markets and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 110.64 points or 0.15 per cent to settle at 73,903.91. ,The index dropped by 270.78 points or 0.36 per cent to a low of 73,743.77.

Broader NSE Nifty dipped 8.70 points or 0.04 per cent to 22,453.30. Both Sensex and Nifty scaled lifetime high levels in intraday trade on Monday before settling around 0.5% higher. From the Sensex basket, Kotak Mahindra Bank, HCL Technologies, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro were the major laggards.

Mahindra & Mahindra, Nestle, Tata Motors and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers. In Asian markets, Shanghai settled lower while Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong ended in the positive territory. European markets were trading mostly in the green. Wall Street ended mostly lower on Monday.

India's manufacturing sector growth climbed to a 16-year high in March on the back of the strongest increase in output and new orders since October 2020, amid reports of buoyant demand conditions, a monthly survey said on Tuesday. In its third straight day of gains, Sensex jumped 363.20 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at 74,014.55 while Nifty climbed 135.10 points or 0.61 per cent to close at 22,462. *—PTI*

Rupee trades in narrow range against US dollar

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

The rupee witnessed a range-bound trading in initial deals against US dollar on Tuesday, weighed down by a strong American currency and elevated crude oil prices. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 83.37 against the greenback, then touched 83.35, registering a rise of 4 paise over its previous close. Forex market was closed on Friday and Monday on account of 'Good Friday' and annual account closing of banks, respectively. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent higher at 105.06. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.43 per cent to USD 87.80 per barrel. On the domestic macroeconomic front, the government's fiscal deficit at Rs 15 lakh crore at February-end touched 86.5 per cent of the revised annual target, according to the official data. Moreover, GST collections in March grew 11.5 per cent to Rs 1.78 lakh crore on higher domestic sales. *—PTI*

Gold falls Rs 50; silver climbs Rs 430

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

After hitting an all-time high level, gold prices on Tuesday fell Rs 50 to Rs 68,370 per 10 grams in the local market, following weak trends in the international markets, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous session, the precious metal closed at Rs 68,420 per 10 grams. However, silver prices climbed Rs 430 to Rs 79,000 per kg. In the previous session, it had settled at Rs 78,570 per kg. In the overseas markets, spot gold at COMEX was trading at USD 2,255 per ounce, down by USD 2 from the previous close. "Meanwhile, the US dollar index rallied to a five-month high, which also weighed down on the precious metal prices," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities. However, silver prices were higher at USD 25.55 per ounce. Its prevous close was USD 25.13 per ounce. *—PTI*

IREDA logs highest-ever loan sanction in FY23-24

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

State-owned Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) on Tuesday said that it has recorded its highest-ever annual loan sanctions and disbursements in fiscal 2023-24. The company has sanctioned loans amounting to Rs 37,354 crore and disbursed loans worth Rs 25,089 crore during the fiscal year 2023-24, an IREDA statement said. According to the statement, this has led to a significant growth of 26.71 per cent in the loan book, which now stands at Rs 59,650 crore compared to Rs 47,076 crore a year ago. *—PTI*

Sobha Ltd gets Rs 46 cr income tax notice

MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

In a regulatory filing on Monday, Sobha informed that the "company has received demand notices under section 156 of the Income Tax Act, 1961 for Rs 13.12 crore and Rs 32.68 crore related to AY 2016-17 and AY 2022-23 respectively, due to disallowances of certain expenses and other additions."Sobha said it is in the process of filing an appeal before the Commissioner of Income Tax (Appeals), against the said orders within the prescribed timelines. The company has legal and factual grounds to substantiate its case. The company is in the process of evaluating the implications of these orders on the financial statements," Sobha said. There is no impact on operations or other activities, it added. Bengaluru-based Sobha Ltd is one of the leading real estate firms in the country.—PTI

Manufacturing growth hits 16-year high

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

It reflects stronger growth of new orders and flow of stocks *PHOTO: PTI*

India's manufacturing sector growth climbed to a 16-year high in March on the back of the strongest increase in output and new orders since October 2020, amid reports of buoyant demand conditions, a monthly survey said on Tuesday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) surged to a 16-year high of 59.1 in March, from 56.9 in February, reflecting stronger growth of new orders, output and input stocks as well as renewed job creation.

In Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction. Manufacturing output rose for the 33rd month running in March, and to the greatest extent since October 2020. Growth quickened across the consumer, intermediate and investment goods sectors.

Inflows of new work strengthened from both domestic and export markets. New export orders increased at the fastest pace since May 2022, the survey said.

On the outlook for the Indian manufacturing sector, companies remained confident on an average, with 28 per cent forecasting output growth in the year ahead and 1 per cent expecting a contraction.

The overall level of sentiment remained elevated, but slipped to a four-month low as inflation concerns weighed on confidence.

The HSBC India Manufacturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers. *—PTI*

AMID BORDER TENSIONS

'Production can help India beat China'

SURAT, 2 APRIL

S Jaishankar *PHOTO: PTI*

To compete with China on the economic front, India should focus on manufacturing, a key sector which was ignored by governments before Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said.

Noting that tension at the border with China has caused "abnormality" in New Delhi-Beijing relations, he said India's thinking is absolutely clear that unless there is peace and stability in the border areas, the ties between the two Asian powers will not improve.

There is no other way to counter China on the economic front, insisted the career diplomat-turned-politician while replying to questions from audience members on how he saw India's relationship with the world's second largest economy as it moves towards becoming a USD 5 trillion economy.

Jaishankar was speaking at a corporate summit on "Bharat's Economic Rising," organised by the Southern Gujarat Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SGCCI).

Jaishankar, a former ambassador to China, emphasised that tension at the border has affected Sino-Indian ties.

Asked about relationship with Pakistan which remains strained and New Delhi's fight against terrorism sponsored from across the border, Jaishankar asserted India should never compromise on terrorism.

There is no doubt that India is rising, and now it is up to "us to see how we connect ourselves with the world and use opportunities and challenges thrown by it," he said. *—PTI*

- To compete with China on the economic front, India should focus on manufacturing, a key sector which was ignored by governments before Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said.

MCA records high incorporations in FY23-24

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) announced that the fiscal year 2023-2024 has witnessed the highest number of incorporations on record, surpassing any of the previous financial years on Tuesday in a post shared on X.

In particular, the number of companies incorporated during the fiscal year 2023-2024 soared to 185,314, a rise from the 159,339 companies incorporated in the previous financial year 2022-2023.

This surge in company incorporations underscores the resilience and growth potential of India's corporate sector, with businesses across various industries contributing to the nation's economic development.

As stakeholders look ahead, the record-high incorporations in 2023-2024 signal promising opportunities for business expansion, job creation, and economic prosperity, further cementing India's position as a preferred destination for investment and enterprise. *—ANI*

'SAVING LIVES'

Biotech, Netherlands firm ally for oral polio vaccine

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

Indian vaccine manufacturer Bharat Biotech and the Netherlands-based Bilthoven Biologicals BV, (BBio) announced a collaboration, to further strengthen the production and supply security of Oral Polio Vaccines (OPV).

Bharat Biotech, a global leader in vaccine and biotherapeutic innovation, will procure drug substances for the production of oral polio vaccines to be supplied within India and globally.

Through this collaboration, Bharat Biotech and BBio, a wholly owned subsidiary of Serum Institute of India Private Limited, will jointly obtain regulatory approvals and licences required to commercially manufacture OPVs in India for global supplies from drug substances manufactured in the Netherlands at Bilthoven Biologicals.

Bharat Biotech is the largest manufacturer of oral polio vaccines, according to the company. India was certified polio-free by the Regional Polio Certification Commission on 27 March, 2014. The last case of wild poliovirus in the country was reported on 13 January, 2011 from Howrah, West Bengal, and no wild poliovirus case have been reported thereafter from any state or Union Territory of the country.

Polio, remains a serious health threat, leading to paralysis and even death in severe cases. Vaccination is the preventive measure against polio. *—PTI*

The plant aims to ensure responsible water management *PHOTO: PTI*

PepsiCo to invest ₹1,266 cr for flavour manufacturing plant

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

PepsiCo India on Tuesday said it will invest Rs 1,266 crore to set up a flavour manufacturing facility at Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh as part of its expansion plans in the country. The plant spread over 22 acres, will play a significant role in scaling up PepsiCo's beverage production in India, generating employment and positively impacting the local economy, the company said in a statement. The construction of the upcoming plant is slated to start in 2024 and is expected to be operational in the first quarter of 2026, it added.

PepsiCo's first flavour manufacturing facility in India is in Channo, Punjab.

PepsiCo India said in line with its global sustainability goals, the new manufacturing facility will operate entirely on renewable energy sources leading to a reduction in carbon footprint by an impressive 1.9 metric tonne per day.

With zero liquid discharge technology, the plant aims to achieve approximately 90 per cent overall water efficiency, ensuring responsible management of water resources, and replenishing 100 per cent of the water used at the facility, the company said. *—PTI*

SBI forecasts 15 per cent growth in deposits for FY25

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

State Bank of India (SBI) has unveiled expectations of substantial growth in both deposits and credit for the fiscal year 2025. SBI forecasted deposits to grow at a rate of 14.5 per cent-15 per cent and credit to expand between 16.0 per cent-16.5 per cent in FY25, anticipating a surge in economic activity, in a report released on Tuesday.

This outlook comes amidst a backdrop of sustained momentum in credit growth, particularly across agriculture, MSME, and services sectors, as revealed by the latest credit growth numbers.

Despite geopolitical tensions and concerns over the continuity of a higher interest rate regime, India has emerged as a magnet for foreign funds, defying market expectations.

However, amidst these positive indicators, India stands out as a notable exception in the global economic landscape.

As stakeholders prepare for the evolving economic landscape, SBI's projections provide valuable insights into the trajectory of India's banking sector and monetary policy decisions.

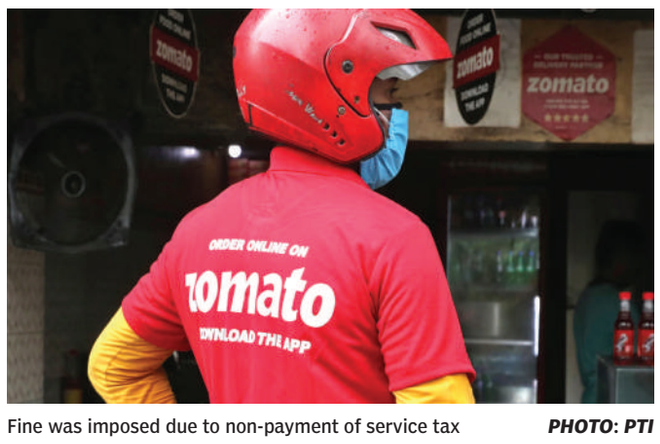
With expectations of robust growth in deposits and credit, coupled with potential rate cuts on the horizon, India remains poised for continued economic resilience and growth in the coming fiscal year. *—ANI*

- This outlook comes amidst a backdrop of sustained momentum in credit growth, particularly across agriculture, MSME, and services sectors, as revealed by the latest credit growth numbers.

SHARES IN FOCUS

Zomato gets ₹184 crore GST notice

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL



Fine was imposed due to non-payment of service tax *PHOTO: PTI*

Shares of Zomato Ltd were in focus on Tuesday after the online food delivery platform said it received a Rs 184.18 crore GST demand from Commissioner, Adjudication, Central Tax, New Delhi. This was for non-payment of service tax for the period of October 2014 to June 2017 for certain sales made by the foreign subsidiaries and branches of the company to its customers located outside India.

"Order passed under Section 73(1) of the Finance Act, 1994 for an amount of Rs 92,09,90,306/-, applicable interest (not quantified) and penalty of Rs 92,09,90,306," Zomato said in a BSE filing.

Zomato said it has a strong case on merits and the company will be filing an appeal against the order before the appropriate authority.

Zomato had earlier received a tax demand and penalty worth Rs 23.26 crore from Karnataka tax authorities. In that case also, Zomato felt it has a strong case on merits.

"The demand order has been received confirming demand on account of non-payment of service tax for the period October 2014 to June 2017 determined basis certain sales made by the foreign subsidiaries and branches of the company to its customers located outside India. The company in its response to the show cause notice had clarified on the allegations along with supporting documents and judicial precedents, which appears to not have been appreciated by the authorities while passing the order," Zomato said.

Zomato said it has a strong case to defend the matter before the relevant appellate authority and does not expect any financial impact on the company. *—PTI*

Ben Stokes pulls out of T20 World Cup

LONDON, 2 APRIL

England's star player Ben Stokes on Tuesday pulled out of the upcoming T20 World Cup, saying the "sacrifice" will help him focus on regaining his fitness to bowl full throttle and be the "all-rounder I want to be for the foreseeable future". The country's Test captain has informed the England & Wales Cricket Board about his decision, two months ahead of the showpiece that will be held in the USA and West Indies. "I'm working hard and focusing on building my bowling fitness back up to fulfil a full role as an all-rounder in all formats of cricket. "Opting out of the IPL and the World Cup will hopefully be a sacrifice that allows me to be the all-rounder I want to be for the foreseeable future," Stokes said in a statement issued by the ECB. *—PTI*

Singapore's only Olympic gold medallist retires

SINGAPORE, 2 APRIL

Joseph Schooling, the swimmer who won Singapore's first and to date only Olympic gold medal in 2016, has announced his retirement from the pool at the age of 28. Known in the city-state as "Singapore's Flying Fish", Schooling stunned the swimming world when he beat his boyhood hero Michael Phelps to win the 100 metres butterfly with a time of 50.39 seconds at the Rio Olympics. It was the American swimming legend Phelps's last individual race of his career and came after Phelps won a record eight gold medals at the London Olympics in 2012. Schooling found it difficult to match that level of global success after 2016, winning a solitary bronze medal at the 2017 world championships and crashing out in the heats in his title defence at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. *—Al Jazeera*

EPL club Everton announces $112M losses

LIVERPOOL, 2 APRIL

Premier League club Everton reported losses of 89.1 million pounds ($112.5 million) in its latest accounts on Sunday. Its losses for the 2022-23 season went up from 44.7 million pounds in the previous campaign. The Merseyside club was docked six points earlier this season for breaching the Premier League's financial rules and is waiting to learn if it will face more punishment for further breaches. Everton is 16th in the 20-team EPL, three points above the relegation zone. In a statement Everton pointed to the "indefinite suspension of key commercial partnerships" as a factor in the accounts. The move came in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. *—AP*

F1 owner Liberty Media announces MotoGP takeover

DUBAI, 2 APRIL

Formula One owner Liberty Media has agreed to buy MotoGP in a deal valued at about 4.2 billion euros ($4.5bn), the United States-based company said. MotoGP said in a statement on Monday that Liberty Media would acquire "approximately 86 per cent" stake from Spain-based owner Dorna. The acquisition is expected to be completed by the end of 2024, subject to clearances and approvals by competition and foreign investment law authorities in various jurisdictions. Liberty will not be the first company to own both Formula One and MotoGP. *—PTI*

FIDE Candidates: Praggu enters as India's best bet

Experts believe that India is the new Russia of Chess

TORONTO, 2 APRIL

Teen sensation R Praggnanandhaa will enter as the favourite among the three Indian participants in the Candidates chess tournament that will get underway here from Wednesday to decide the challenger for the next world championship match.

After nearly 35 years as many as three Indians – Praggnanandhaa, D Gukesh and Vidit Gujrathi -- have qualified for the most prestigious event of the year that has just eight participants. According to an expert, India is the new Russia of the chess world, as in the past such dominance was only shown by Russian players.

Praggnanandhaa, 18, starts as the rating favourite among Indians and also as the favourite of the chess buffs even though the top bracket of the world feels that all the three Indian youngsters still need time to settle among the world elite.

Fearless and psychologically sound, Praggnandhaa will likely have the assistance of eight-time Russian champion Peter Svidler for the event. One cannot help but recall that during one of the world championships Indian grandmaster P Harikrishna had assisted Svidler in his quest to be the world champion.

After nearly 35 years as many as three Indians – Praggnanandhaa, D Gukesh and Vidit Gujrathi -- have qualified for the event *PHOTO: ANI*

While Svidler could be a game-changer, it will largely depend on Praggnandhaa's form and how he adapts in this tough event, where the eight players will play each other twice. At just 17 years, Gukesh is hailed as one of the finest talents around. The Indian is also the youngest participant in the fray and second youngest ever after Robert James Fischer – aka Bobby Fischer - to qualify for the elite event. Fischer was 16-year-old when he qualified in 1959.

That Fischer's record lasted a whopping 65 years, goes to prove what it takes to be one of the candidates and if Gukesh wins it, he will be the youngest ever to compete for the World Championship title.

Vidit Gujrathi will have his task cut out and much will depend on his form. In his last outing, probably training his sights for the candidates, the Nasik-based player did not do well at the Prague masters and slipped considerably on the rating list also.

Gujrathi made it thanks to a remarkable performance in the Grand Swiss tournament at Isle of Man, UK, last year. The Indian had displayed top form in the final stages of the tournament. *—PTI*

We need to believe we are as good as anyone, says Jena

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

Olympic-bound javelin thrower Kishore Jena says facilities and funding have never been as good as they are right now for India's athletes, who need to improve their mindset and start considering themselves as good as anyone else in the world.

Jena undertook a 35-day training stint in Gold Coast in Australia from 5 February to 10 March, funded by Target Olympics Podium Scheme (TOPS). Speaking to PTI, Jena said he hardly found anything different save for the warmer weather Down Under, which was more conducive for his training.

"We have everything here, I trained at NIS Patiala where the facilities are world class and as good as in Australia. I have been looked after very well by Sports Ministry, SAI (Sports Authority of India), getting funding from TOPS," Jena, youngest of the seven children of a paddy farmer in Kothasahi village near Puri in Odisha, said in the interview facilitated by SAI. "What is lacking is in ourselves (athletes), our mindset, the mindset that we are as good as any other in the world though we are improving on this front as well." His goal is to deliver his personal best at the upcoming Paris Olympics but the Asian Games silver-medallist feels he can enter the exclusive Indian club of Diamond League top-three finishers. Jena, who improved his personal best from 78.05m to 87.54m last year, is beginning his season at the Doha leg of the prestigious Diamond League on 10 May.

Kishore Jena *PHOTO: PTI*

He will also take part in Golden Spike at Ostrava, Czech Republic, on 28 May- a World Athletics Continental Tour gold level event -- and the Paris leg of the Diamond League on 7 July. *—PTI*

India Men's hockey team heads to Australia

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The Indian men's hockey team has left for Australia to compete in a five-match Test series beginning 6 April, a crucial assignment ahead of the Paris Olympics in July-August.

Harmanpreet Singh-led side left on Monday night. The team has been in good form and recently won three out of its four matches during the FIH Pro League in Bhubaneswar.

The opening game on 6 April, the series features matches on 7, 10, 12 and 13 April. It is essential for the Indian team to enhance their performance, build and check-through the improvement areas for the coming Paris Olympics, Hockey India stated in a press release. "As we embark on this crucial tour to Australia, we are filled with determination and excitement," Harmanpreet said. *—PTI*

Harmanpreet Singh will led the team five-match Test series *PHOTO: X/@HOCKEY INDIA*

TODAY'S MATCH

Time: 7.30 pm

Where To Watch:

Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: ACA–VDCA Stadium, Visakhapatnam

Delhi Capitals' captain Rishabh Pant and Kolkata Knight Riders' captain Shreyas Iyer during a practice session ahead of the match *PHOTO: PTI*

Delhi Capitals' Panth ready for KKR challenge

VISAKHAPATNAM, 2 APRIL

Delhi Capitals would be keen to prove that their comfortable win against Chennai Super Kings was not a flash in the pan while Kolkata Knight Riders would be eyeing a hat-trick of victories when the two sides face off in the IPL here on Wednesday.

The Capitals would be buoyed by the 20-run victory here on Sunday, their first of the season, against defending champions CSK who were outsmarted by Rishabh Pant and Co. in all departments of the game. And come Wednesday, the Capitals will have to put another such performance against KKR, whose batters pummelled Royal Challengers Bengaluru bowlers to notch their second win of the season on 29 March.

For DC, the onus will be on Prithvi Shaw and veteran Australian David Warner to provide a solid start. Meanwhile, Pant continues his inspirational journey. After two scratchy innings, the skipper gave a glimpse of his devastating best as he scored his maiden fifty. The likes of South African Tristan Stubbs and Australian Mitchell Marsh, both capable of launching an assault on the Opposition, need to be better towards the end as DC lack domestic power hitters. *—PTI*

Kohli seems to have evolved again, says David Hussey

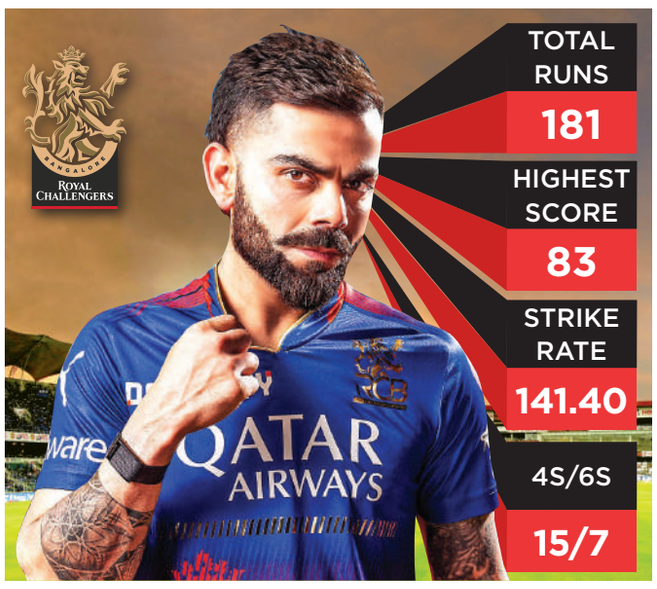
MUMBAI, 2 APRIL

Virat Kohli seems to have "evolved again" avowed former Australia cricketer David Hussey, who warned against writing off the champion player after a debate ensued on the Indian batter's strike rate.

Despite leading the run chart for Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the ongoing edition of IPL, Kohli faced some criticism for not batting aggressively enough against KKR in their last game. Kohli is the joint-highest run getter so far with RR's Riyan Parag, scoring 181 runs in three matches with two fifties at a strike rate of 141.4.

With the T20 World Cup impending, Kohli's place in the team has also been a topic of discussion even though he played one of the most memorable innings for India in their clash against arch-rivals Pakistan in Melbourne.

"Virat Kohli is the leading run scorer, isn't he in the IPL currently?" Hussey replied when asked about what he made of the debate around Kohli's strike rate. "I don't think he's going to have too many issues. If you see the strike rate in this IPL, he seems to have taken his game to a new level, he's evolved again," Hussey said. "You never write off champions, like you never write off Steve Smith, (like) you never write off Ricky Ponting, Sachin Tendulkar, Rohit Sharma. You never write them off and I'm certain that Virat Kohli is going to come out in the next World Cup and be the dominant force that he has been for the better part of a decade. Never write off your champions," Hussey reiterated. *—PTI*



Churchill Brothers blank TRAU FC in I-League

KALYANI KALYANI, 2 APRIL

Churchill Brothers FC Goa registered their seventh win of the 2023-24 I-League season, defeating TRAU FC 2-0 at the Kalyani Municipal Stadium, in Kalyani, on Monday. Both of Churchill Brothers' goals came in the first half, as the Red Machines went into the half-time break with a two-goal cushion.

Midfielder Stendly Teotonio Fernandes didn't waste a minute as he scored right after kick-off, while TRAU's Kongbrailatpam Manjit Sharma was adjudged to have scored an own goal in the first half injury time.

With this win, they now provisionally move up to the eighth position in the I-League table, having garnered 27 points from 22 matches. Ninth-placed Aizawl FC, however, are two points behind Churchill Brothers, and have played one game less. TRAU, who had already confirmed relegation earlier, remain rooted to the bottom of the table, with 10 points from 21 games. *—ANI*

Atletico score early and late to beat Villarreal

MADRID, 2 APRIL

Atletico Madrid scored early and late to beat Villareal 2-1 in an entertaining Spanish league game and snap a two-game losing streak on Monday.

Villarreal won its last four matches and was nine games unbeaten, but a last-gasp goal from substitute Saúl Ñíguez gave Atletico all three points and took it into fourth place in La Liga, two points above Athletic Bilbao. Ñíguez got the winner with three minutes remaining when he coolly side-footed a low shot past the goalkeeper from 17 yards out. It was the first league goal of the season for the central midfielder, who went on to replace Pablo Barrios just three minutes earlier.

Axel Witsel put the capital club 1-0 up when he headed home a corner from Rodrigo Riquelme after eight minutes. Villarreal's Norwegian striker Alexander Sørloth equalized four minutes into the second half with his 14th goal of the season.

The late defeat was a crushing blow for Villarreal, which started poorly but came into the match in the second half. It remained in 10th place, ahead of Getafe on goal difference and a point behind Osasuna in ninth. *—AP*

ALLEGED PHYSICAL ASSAULT

AIFF suspends Sharma until further notice

NEW DELHI, 2 APRIL

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Tuesday suspended its executive committee member Deepak Sharma until further notice for his alleged physical assault of two women players in Goa, two days after it stopped short of doing the same.

Two footballers of Himachal Pradesh-based Khad FC, taking part in the Indian Women's Football (IWL) League second division, had alleged that Sharma, the owner of the club, had barged into their room and physically assaulted them on the night of 28 March. On Saturday, the AIFF asked Sharma to refrain from football-related activities till the conclusion of a probe by a panel into his alleged incident. Sharma was arrested by Goa police after the host state association lodged a complaint and later released on bail.

"The AIFF Executive Committee has decided to suspend Deepak Sharma from participating in any football-related activities until further notice," the national federation said in a release. Before that, the Emergency Committee of the AIFF comprising president Kalyan Chaubey, vice-president N A Haris and treasurer Kipa Ajay, on Monday took stock of the complaints received from the players against Sharma.

Deepak Sharma *PHOTO: FACEBOOK*

Thereafter, a meeting of AIFF member associations was held on Monday night and "Sharma was called and heard for a few minutes before he was advised to leave the meeting". In the complaint sent to the AIFF, the two players said, according to sources, that Sharma was mostly in an inebriated state and they were "scared for their lives".

Sports Minister Anurag Thakur had asked the AIFF to take "quick" and "strong legal action" against the official. On Tuesday, the AIFF also dissolved the three-member committee formed on March 30 to probe the incident, and instead referred the matter to its Disciplinary Committee.—*PTI*